

HALF-HOURS WITH THE HINDUS.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,
And Uniform with this Volume.

1. SCENES AND STORIES FROM THE LAND
OF IDOLS.
 2. PICTURES OF LIFE IN INDIA.
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HALF HOURS

WITH

THE HINDUS.

BY

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(Late of Calcutta),

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"WOMAN'S INFLUENCE IN THE EAST," "STUDIES IN
MOHAMMEDANISM," ETC., ETC.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

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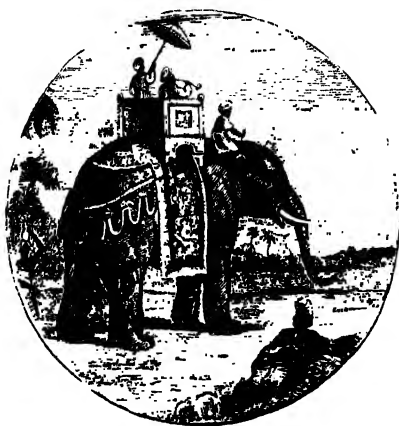
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THE MANGO-TREE TRICK.

I.

CONJURING TRICKS.

THE East is the home of conjurers and jugglers, and both young and old amongst Hindus and Mohammedans take intense delight in witnessing the performances of the men and women whose whole business in life it seems to be to astonish and amuse their fellow-creatures. And I have thought

that the young people of the West would like to read of some of the tricks of legerdemain practised by the conjurers of the East.

My first experience of conjurers was on board the *Dacca*, the noble vessel on which I went out to India some years ago. At Port Said, where we stopped for a few hours to coal, a celebrated magician came on board to show the passengers his tricks, and to make a little money. He had a rabbit with him which he pretended assisted him in his clever feats.

Bidding us make a circle round him, the man began operations by borrowing a florin from a young gentleman who was watching the proceedings with rather a sceptical look on his face. Having received the coin the conjurer passed it on to a young lady whom he requested to look at the silver, and to hold it so that we all might see it. The next command was for the young lady to close her hand and immediately open it again; when lo! the florin had disappeared, and a worn halfpenny was found in its place.

Then the conjurer borrowed a ring from a lady, which he gave to a gentleman, who showed it to the company on the palm of his hand. To the gentleman now came the command to close and open his hand; and when he had done so, lo the ring was no more to be seen, and nothing had appeared in its place! A laugh went round the circle, and a general whisper to the effect that neither the florin nor the ring would be found again. However, the suspicion was unjust, for the conjurer, turning to his rabbit, said, "Now, rabbit, find the silver and the ring." Whereupon the well-trained animal opened its mouth, and to our astonish-

ment out dropped the missing articles on to the deck, and were at once picked up by their respective owners.

The conjurer then took off his turban or head-dress, which was a piece of muslin perhaps three yards in length, and giving one end to one person and the other to another, he requested a third party to cut the material right through the middle. This we saw carefully and thoroughly done, and yet when the two pieces were screwed up in the hands of the performer and spread out again for our inspection, not a trace of a cut could be found, but the turban was as entire as it had been at the beginning.

Next a quantity of string was cut up into little pieces and set fire to. This burning mass the conjurer put into his mouth and pretended to swallow, all the time sending out volumes of smoke. Suddenly the smoke stopped, and the man, putting his hand to his mouth, began to pull out, in place of the string, a host of things, such as ribbons and beads, ending at last with a long sword. How such a stock of goods had been stowed away in his mouth passes comprehension. The conjurer then proceeded to hide a hen's egg in a hat lent him by one of the passengers; but when the hat was lifted the egg had disappeared. Again the rabbit was appealed to to find the missing article; and amidst roars of laughter the quaint little animal immediately kicked the egg out from between its hind legs.

The concluding trick was perhaps the most singular of all. The conjurer put his hands behind his back, and kept them there. Then he shook his head, and money fell out of his eyes. Again he shook his head,

and apples came out of his mouth. Again he shook his head, and round heavy pieces of lead fell out of his nostrils. And he kept on shaking his sagacious old cranium until the deck around him was simply littered with goods like the counter of a draper's shop in England when some young ladies are shopping. Of course, at the conclusion of the performance a hat was passed round, and the clever conjurer was well rewarded for his pains.

At Madras, in Calcutta, and in other places in India, on subsequent occasions, I saw the same tricks performed with sometimes a little variation. I have seen more than one juggler insert a blunt sword into the mouth and pass it a long way down the throat even into the stomach ; but it was a repulsive sight, and I did what I could to discourage the performance, feeling sure that it was injurious to the operators.

Once I remember a conjurer showed us six different coloured powders, which he poured into a tin of water, and after mixing the compounds well together he drank off the whole. Then, asking us if we would like to see the powders again, he opened his mouth and blew out vigorously one colour after another until we had once more the six powders in the dry state in which they were at the beginning.

Miss Eden, who lived some time in Madras, writing of a clever conjurer she knew, says : " He did all the ordinary tricks with balls and balancing, and then he spit fire in large flames, and put a little rice into the top of a basket or small tray and shook it, and before our eyes a tiny handful of rice turned into a large quantity of cowrie shells. Then he made a little

boy, one of my servants, sit down, and he put a small black pebble into his hand, and apparently did nothing but wave a little switch round his head, and forty rupees came tumbling out of the boy's little hands. He made him put them up again, and hold them as tight as he could ; but in an instant the rupees were all gone, and a large live frog jumped out." We can imagine the dismay and disappointment of the little fellow.

In a book entitled the " Good Old Days of Honourable John Company," a few very good stories are told of conjurers. It is a book well worth reading. Let me give one or two extracts.

"The conjurer was seated on a white cloth. He asked some one present to produce a rupee, and 'to lay it down at the remote edge of the cloth. He then asked for a signet-ring. Several were offered him, and he chose out one which had a very large oval seal, projecting well beyond the gold hoop on both sides. This ring he tossed and tumbled several times in his hands, now throwing it into the air and catching it, then shaking it between his clasped hands, all the time mumbling half-articulate words in Hindustanee. Then setting the ring down on the cloth at about half arm's length in front of him, he said, slowly and distinctly, ' Ring, rise up and go to the rupee.'

"The ring rose with the seal uppermost and, resting on the hoop, slowly, with a kind of dancing or jerking motion, it passed over the cloth until it came to where the rupee lay on the remote edge ; then it lay down on the coin. The conjurer thereupon said, ' Ring, lay hold of the rupee and bring it to me.' The projecting edge

of the seal seemed to grapple the edge of the coin; the ring and the rupee rose into a kind of wrestling attitude, and, with the same dancing and jerking motion, the two returned to within reach of the juggler's hand."

Another tale is still more extraordinary. It runs : "The juggler gave me a coin to hold, and then seated himself about five yards from me, on a small rug, from which he never attempted to move during the whole performance. I showed the coin to several persons who were close beside me on a form in front of the juggler. At a sign from him I not only grasped the coin I held firmly in my right hand, but crossing that hand with equal tightness with my left, I enclosed them both as firmly as I could between my knees. Of course I was positively certain that the small coin was within my double fists.

"The conjurer then began a sort of incantation, accompanied by a monotonous and discordant kind of recitative, and repeating the words, 'Ram, Sammu,' during some minutes. He then suddenly stopped, and still keeping his seat, made a quick motion with his right hand, as if throwing something at me, giving at the same time a puff with his mouth. At that instant I felt my hands suddenly distend, and become partly open, while I experienced a sensation as if a cold ball of dough or something equally soft, nasty, and disagreeable was now between my palms. I started to my feet in astonishment, also to the astonishment of others, and opening my hands found there no coin, but to my horror and alarm I saw a young snake, all alive-oh ! and of all snakes in the world a cobra,



INDIAN JUGGLERS.

folded or rather coiled roundly up. I threw it instantly to the ground, trembling with rage and fear as if already bitten by the deadly reptile, which began immediately to crawl along the ground, to the alarm and amazement of every one present.

“The juggler now got up for the first time since he had sat down, and catching hold of the snake displayed its length, which was nearly two feet. He then took it cautiously by the tail, and opening his mouth to its widest extent, let the head of the snake drop into it, and deliberately commenced to swallow the reptile, till the end of the tail only was visible, then making a sudden gulp the whole disappeared. After that he came up to the spectators, and, opening his mouth wide, permitted us to look into his throat, but no snake or snake’s tail was visible, and it was seemingly down his throat altogether. During the remainder of the performance we never saw the snake again, nor did the man profess his ability to make it reappear.”

One of the cleverest of the conjuring feats of India is, I think, that known as the “mango trick.” Mango is a most delicious fruit peculiar to the East. The conjurer will take the stone of this fruit and say, “Now, watch me, and see if I do not cause this stone to take root in the earth, and grow into a tree which shall bring forth fruit.” We watch accordingly. The conjurer produces a quantity of soil, which he forms into a little hillock, and into this soil he places, with many a flourish of the hand and many an incantation, the stone of the mango.

The whole is then covered over with a cloth, under

which the man places his hands. "Grow ! grow !" he exclaims, and then uncovers the earth suddenly, when we see on examination that a little shoot is pushing its way through the soil. Again the cloth is spread, and the conjurer blows over it, and mutters unintelligibly ; and when we look once more we find that the little shoot has grown into a plant a few inches high. And gradually the plant becomes larger and larger, until it stands nearly a yard above the mound.

So much I have seen with my own eyes, and very wonderful it appeared to me, but I never saw a conjurer's tree bear fruit, as some have declared they have done. Sir Edwin Arnold, in his book "*India Revisited*," for instance, says, "The Maharajah of Benares was kind enough to send the entire company of his palace-jugglers for our entertainment. They performed with much adroitness the usual series of Hindu tricks. They made the mango-tree grow and bear fruit." I wish I had been there to witness it !

Another famous juggler's artifice is the one known as the "basket trick." On several occasions I saw this entertainment carried out to perfection. The conjurer had a wickerwork basket, in size and shape resembling a large old-fashioned beehive. This he showed to the company. Then he spoke to a handsome young girl standing by, whom he called his daughter, and bade her sit down on the floor in the centre of the room. The graceful girl obeyed after making a salaam to the company.

The man then covered her with the basket, so that she was hidden entirely from public view. Thereupon

he pretended to be angry with her for being a wilful and disobedient child, and reproached her with her undutiful behaviour. The girl replied, indignantly denying the charges ; but the man only got more and more excited, and held forth threats, at which the frightened girl remonstrated, and finally asked for pardon. The juggler, however, was by this time in a towering rage, and suddenly drawing his sword he ran it through and through the basket in every direction. Shrieks of fright and pain proceeded from the girl, but the man took no heed. Wild with anger he proceeded with his deadly work, and blood was seen to trickle out from under the wickerwork, and at length a suffocating groan seemed to proclaim that the girl was at the point of death.

Nowise sobered by this, the conjurer imprecated evil on his murdered child, and coolly wiped his sword and returned it to the scabbard. Then advancing towards the basket, he kicked it over and exposed to view—the floor of the room. The girl had disappeared completely. The whole thing had been a farce. And in answer to a call from the juggler his daughter came from behind us all smiles and salaams, as scathless as any of our party, and much amused at our astonishment and surprise. At what stage of the entertainment the girl had succeeded in slipping out of the basket we could not tell. As there were no trap-doors and no curtains, the trick must be considered an exceptionally clever one.

Miss C. F. Gordon-Cumming, in her book entitled “In the Himalayas and on the Indian Plains,” mentions a few conjuring tricks which she either saw or heard

of. She writes : " Another curious feat is to throw a cocoanut into the air and catch it on the head, when the nut shivers to atoms instead of breaking the head as might be expected. Of course this is all knack, just like breaking a poker across your arm. After this the juggler took a large earthen vessel with wide mouth, filled it with water, and turned it upside down, when all the water of course ran out. He then reversed the jar, which all present perceived to be quite full, and all the earth around was perfectly dry. He then emptied the jar and handed it round for general inspection. He bade one of the company fill it to the brim ; after which he upset it, but not a drop of water flowed, nevertheless to the astonishment of all it was quite empty. This trick was shown repeatedly, and at last he broke the jar to prove that it really was nothing but the ordinary earthenware that it appeared.

" Next, a large basket was produced, and on lifting it a pariah dog lay crouching on the ground. The basket cover was replaced, and the second peep showed a litter of seven puppies with their interesting mother. A goat, a pig, and other animals successively appeared from this magic receptacle, although the exhibitor stood quite alone, in full view of all spectators."

Another trick which it is very difficult to understand is the one that consists in a man, with his feet doubled up under him, ascending, to the sound of music, into the air, and maintaining himself there with the aid of nothing but a light pole ; and while in that strange position the juggler will count his beads many times over. A still more marvellous variation of this performance is related by Ibu Batuta, who says, " I



INDIAN CONJURING TRICK.

was once in the presence of the Emperor of Hindustan when two jogis entered wrapt up in cloaks with their heads covered. The Emperor caressed them, and said, pointing to me, 'This is a stranger ; show him what he has never yet seen.' They answered, 'We will.' One of them then assumed the form of a cube, and rose from the earth, and in this cubic shape he occupied a place in the air over our heads. His companion then took a sandal belonging to one of those who had come out with him, and struck it upon the ground, as if he had been angry. The sandal thereupon ascended until it came opposite to the cube. It then struck the latter upon the neck, and the jogi descended gradually to the earth, and at last rested in the place which he had left. The Emperor told me that the man who took the form of a cube was a disciple to the owner of the sandal; and, continued he, 'Had I not entertained fears for the safety of thy intellect I should have ordered them to show thee greater things than these.' On this, however, I took a palpitation of the heart, until the Emperor ordered me a medicine, which restored me."

A well-known character in Calcutta many years ago was the famous conjurer Hassan Khan, who gave many private and some public performances. With a short account of this wizard's wonderful deeds I shall close this chapter. The stories are culled from "The Good Old Days of Honourable John Company," the author of which in turn took them from the columns of the Calcutta paper, *The Englishman*.

"One of Hassan Khan's tricks was to borrow a watch and transport it to some unthought-of place, and send the owner to find it. Being present at a

select party at the house of a European gentleman then residing in Upper Circular Road, he politely asked a lady to lend him her watch. Then after the usual by-play, in the view of all present he flung the watch with force from an upper verandah into a tank in front of the house. Every one saw the watch with the chain dangling whisk through the air and fall into the water. A short time after, the fair owner waxing impatient, he requested her to go into the next room and hold out her hand for it. She did so, and behold ! the watch and chain, both dripping wet, came into her hand.

“At another time Hassan Khan took a watch and a ring belonging to different owners, and tied up the two in a handkerchief. After a while he pointed to a press, and enquired if it was locked and who had the key. The owner produced the key from his pocket, the press was opened, and ring, watch, and handkerchief found inside it.”

But Hassan Khan could, it appears, do still more wonderful things—things passing our poor human understanding. *The Englishman* gravely tells us, that this great conjurer “could, without any regard to time, place, or circumstances, produce at will a bag of sandwiches and cakes, or wine of any mark and quality required.” In every case the material supplied was the best of its kind. “Who or what this man was has never been satisfactorily explained. He went about freely, was to be seen everywhere, and mixed with all sorts of people ; but he was always enshrouded in an impenetrable mystery.” Surely he was what the Theosophists call a Mahatma !



GENERAL VIEW OF CALCUTTA.

II.

THE BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA.

CALCUTTA, the capital of British India, and the seat of the supreme government, is situated on the Hugli river, one of the mouths of the sacred Ganges, about eighty miles from the sea. It is at the present day a fine city of nearly a million inhabitants, and contains perhaps more Europeans than any other Eastern city.

It is not, however, of the present I wish to speak but of the past, and of an incident which has given an unenviable notoriety to the capital of our great

Eastern dependency. Every schoolboy and girl has surely heard of the Black Hole of Calcutta. At any rate the story of the Black Hole is one that each succeeding generation of the young people of Great Britain ought to be familiar with, as it is one of the great landmarks of our English history.

Our story takes us back to the year 1756, when Calcutta was a small town with a European population merely of a few hundreds. The English were merchants under the East India Company, and were living in Calcutta altogether for purposes of trade with the natives of the land. The East India Company provided the little band of traders with soldiers for their protection; but the force was so small that in the hour of need it was practically useless. The hour of need arose when Surajah Dowlah, a youth of twenty, who was cruel and profligate, became Viceroy of Bengal in the room of his grandfather Nawab Nazim, a wise ruler, who had been friendly towards the English, and had granted them permission to live and trade in Calcutta.

For some unknown reason the new Viceroy hated the English with a deadly hatred, and, in the month of June 1756, he marched from his capital, Moorshedabad, against Calcutta with an army of fifty thousand men. The English were totally unprepared to resist, with any hope of success, such a great force. Owing to culpable negligence, the fortifications of the town were altogether out of repair, the troops had hardly any arms, the powder was insufficient for the few guns they had, and what there was of it was not good. And the whole fighting force of the little

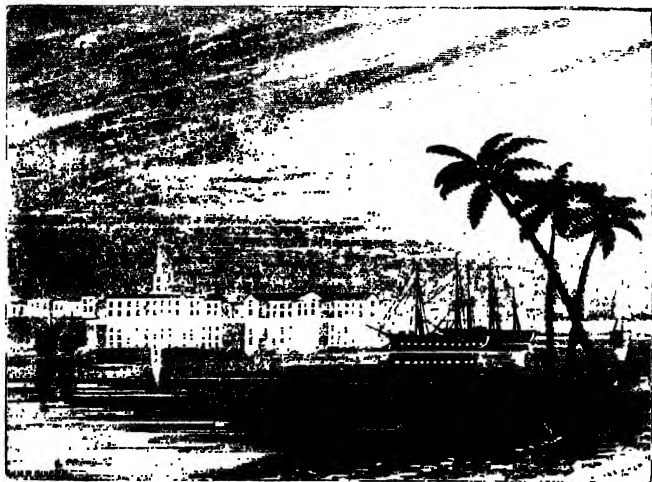
community only amounted to one hundred and seventy British. Just think of one hundred and seventy against fifty thousand ! Were not the odds awful ! And yet these few English, aided by a mere handful of native allies, kept the great army at bay for four days and four nights by sheer courage and daring. The very thought of it should make us proud of our nationality.

At midday on June 15th, 1756, the army of the young Nabob was within the bounds of the East India Company, and in a few minutes the firing commenced and was continued till nightfall. On the 16th hostilities were resumed ; but it was not till the 19th that the yelling hordes of the Viceroy's army stormed the outer trenches and breastworks and reached the gates of Fort William, within which the English had taken refuge. But the fort, owing to its dilapidated condition, was not tenable, and as soon as darkness fell the European women, who would go, were safely conveyed out and embarked on a little vessel which lay in the river, which took them to a place of safety.

At midnight the besiegers advanced to the assault of the fort, but the mere sound of our drums drove them back, and they waited for the light of day ere making a more determined effort. On the 20th the final attack was made ; and the English, seeing the hopelessness of further resistance, resolved to abandon Calcutta. Something like a panic then seems to have set in, and men, women, and children rushed to the water's edge with piteous cries. The few boats there were became overcrowded and soon upset, and most of the occupants miserably perished. Some few

escaped, among whom were Mr. Drake, the governor, Minchin, the commandant, and a Captain Grant.

The soldiers, however, and some of the civilians had not joined in that shameful scramble for life, so that there were left about one hundred and forty-six English in the fort, who chose as their leader a certain Mr. Holwell, one of the Company's surgeons, as brave



CALCUTTA FROM THE HUGLI RIVER.

a man as ever lived. Seeing no hope of escape, the gallant little band resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible ; and such is the valour sometimes born of despair that during the morning of the 20th and until two o'clock in the afternoon the enemy was kept at bay. At that hour, however, the besieged, wearied out, threw down their arms, and prayed for mercy from their savage foes.

At five o'clock the young Nabob, Surajah Dowlah, a tyrant and a coward, entered the fort with the air of a conqueror, though he had kept at a safe distance during the fighting. The first thing the Prince did was to seat himself in the principal hall of the fort, and call Mr. Holwell into his presence. The gallant Englishman obeyed the summons with some anxiety, knowing the character of the young ruler. However, Surajah Dowlah for the moment contented himself with strong language, fiercely upbraiding the British for defending the fort, and complaining bitterly of the small amount of treasure, only £5000, which he had been able to get hold of. Two or three times the angry Prince dismissed and recalled Mr. Holwell, each time asking him "if there were no more money." The sturdy Briton invariably answered, "No"; and was finally dismissed for the night, the Nabob giving him his word as a soldier that he should suffer no harm. What the promise was worth, and how it was kept, we shall see.

When Mr. Holwell, the leader of the English, returned to his comrades, he found them surrounded by a strong guard. Then, without having a suspicion of the awful fate that awaited them, the prisoners asked where they were to be lodged for the night. In reply, the officer of the guard pointed to a room near which they stood, called the Black Hole Prison; and before the poor prisoners had even time to think they were driven at the point of the sword into the little room, the door of which was instantly shut and locked upon them.

The dungeon into which the unfortunate people had

been entrapped was only intended for an occasional military defaulter, and had never contained before more than two or three prisoners at a time, and none at all in the hot season of the year. The Black Hole was just twenty feet by twenty, and had only two small windows in it, and these were partly deprived of, or obstructed from air, by two projecting verandahs. And in this little dungeon, in the summer solstice, when the fierce heat of Bengal is scarcely endurable in the largest houses, one hundred and forty-six prisoners were huddled together like sheep in a penfold.

“Nothing in history or fiction approaches the horrors that were recounted by the few survivors of that night. They cried for mercy. They strove to burst the door. Holwell, who even in that extremity retained some presence of mind, offered large bribes to the gaolers. But the answer was that nothing could be done without the Nabob’s orders ; that the Nabob was asleep, and that he would be angry if any one awoke him. Then the prisoners went mad with despair. They trampled each other down, fought for places at the windows, fought for the pittance of water with which the cruel mercy of the murderers mocked their agonies, raved, prayed, and implored the guards to fire upon them. The gaolers in the meantime held lights to the bars, and shouted with laughter at the frantic struggles of their victims. At length the tumult died away in low gaspings and moanings.”*

So passed that awful night of June 20th, 1756, a night which amongst Englishmen will be held in

* Lord Macaulay.

everlasting remembrance. The morning dawned, and the Nabob, having slept off his debauch, permitted the door of the Black Hole to be opened, and then a sight was witnessed which will scarcely bear to be told. Only twenty-three of the prisoners had survived the horrors of that night. There were one hundred and twenty-three dead bodies in the charnel-house, and the corpses had to be piled up on each side in heaps ere the living could crawl out. And the twenty-three survivors, it is said, were so emaciated and changed with their sufferings that their mothers would not have known them. A pit was at once dug, and the dead were flung into it with all speed and covered up.

Surely we should have thought that even the cruel Nabob would have been softened by such a sight of woe as the dead and the living presented. But neither remorse nor pity seems to have been stirred in the breast of the young savage. As soon as the dead had been buried, Surajah Dowlah called the living into his presence. The brave Holwell was amongst the number. Mrs. Carey, a lady who had refused to leave her husband when the other ladies escaped in the ship, also appeared. It was marvellous how she had lived through the night in the dungeon, when her husband and other strong men had perished.

To these two and the rest of the poor suffering creatures, the Nabob showed no tenderness or pity. Holwell, weak as he was, was loaded with irons and sent up the country, the young Prince threatening to blow him from a gun unless he revealed the hiding-place of the East India Company's treasures. Mrs. Carey was taken into the zenana of the Nabob, and

kept a prisoner for six years. The others were lodged in miserable sheds, and fed only with grain and water. However, eventually, they all regained their freedom.

And what became of the Nabob? Surely such iniquity as his would not go unpunished? No! an awful fate befell him. News of the terrible tragedy of the Black Hole travelled in course of time to Madras, where there were many British, and great was the grief, and fierce the resentment, of all who heard the horrible story. So great was the excitement, and so warm the ardour of the English community, that within forty-eight hours of the arrival of the news an expedition up the Hugli, to succour their fellow-countrymen and to punish the tyrant, had been decided upon.

And Clive, "the daring in war," quite a young soldier, was chosen to lead the rescue army of 2400 men. And bravely and successfully did he do his work. Early in 1757 the English and a few native allies fought a great battle—great in its results—with Surajah Dowlah, on the famous field of Plassey, and defeated his immense host. Even some of his own troops, instigated by one of his generals named Meer Jaffir, turned against the Prince, and assisted in his ruin.

The fact is that the profligacy of the young Nabob, his savage cruelty, and his wretched administration of the affairs of his government, had roused a deep feeling of animosity against him in every quarter. No one seemed sorry at his defeat at Plassey, and when he fled ignominiously to Moorshedabad, his capital, he felt he had no friends left, and none whom

he could trust. The same evening, therefore, giving way to craven fear, he disguised himself in a mean habit; and with a casket of jewels in his hand, he let himself down in the darkness from a window of his palace, and embarking on a little boat on the



LORD CLIVE.

river, fled for his life. The Prince was not to escape, however, out of the clutches of his enemies. Two nights after his flight, he took refuge in the hut of a poor fakir, or holy man, who recognised him at once, even through his disguise. And strange to say, the solitary hermit was a man whom the young

Nabob had treated with great cruelty only thirteen months before by depriving him of his ears.

Now the Prince was to reap what he had sown. He had sown hatred, and he was to reap hatred—he had sown cruelty, and he was to experience it—he had refused mercy to others, and now it was to be denied to himself. Notwithstanding his piteous pleadings the fakir kept him a prisoner, and sent word to his enemies of his whereabouts. The next morning troops sent by Meer Jaffir, who had usurped the vacant throne, captured the guilty and terrified Nabob, who after being subjected to every possible indignity, was carried back as a felon to his own palace, and dragged before the usurper.

It is said that Meer Jaffir, moved with pity, was inclined to spare the life of the wretched Prince, but a son of the new ruler would not hear of such a thing, saying that the throne of Bengal would not be safe while Surajah Dowlah lived. So sentence of death was passed. But it was in plain words a murder; and Meeran, the son of Meer Jaffir, was the murderer. Meeran was only seventeen years of age when he did the horrid deed. At midnight he entered the chamber where his Prince was confined. The unfortunate Surajah Dowlah saw the purpose of his visitor in his eye, and begged for a few minutes' respite for prayer; but even that was denied him. Meeran sprang upon his victim with a cry of hate, and with a few stabs of his dagger slew him.

In the morning the bloody remains of the Nabob were exposed through the city of Moorshedabad on an elephant, after which they were thrown into a

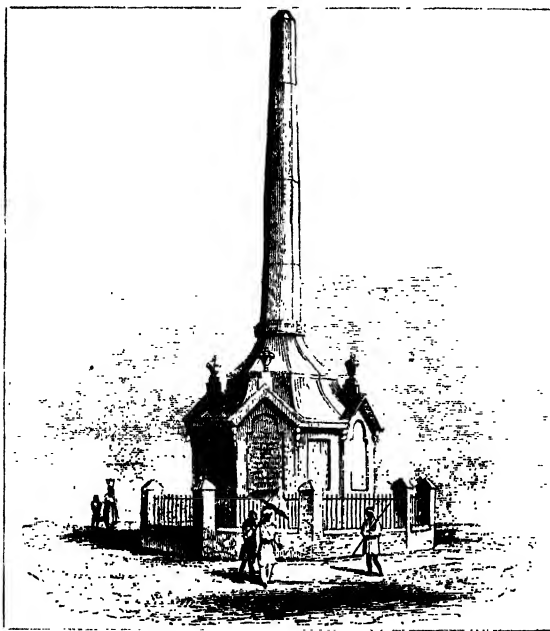
dishonoured grave. Thus was the tragedy of the Black Hole of Calcutta terribly avenged, and the deed was the work of the young Prince's own countrymen ! The gallant Clive would never have committed such a crime, and Meer Jaffir knew it, and sent to the English commander a letter of apology for the fierce conduct of his son and heir. Wicked and cruel as Surajah Dowlah was, we cannot but regret his violent death. Yet *he* had no pity on the hundred and twenty-three victims that perished in the Black Hole. The infamy of the Prince was very great, and his awful death had all the appearance of a judgment, and brought into clear relief the truth of the saying, "The way of transgressors is hard."

With regard to the survivors of the Black Hole tragedy, I think my young readers would like to know that Mr. Holwell lived until 1798, a period of over forty years after the dreadful event. This gentleman erected at Calcutta an obelisk fifty feet high, to the memory of his martyred comrades, which stood for years in the north-west corner of Tank Square, but was at length pulled down in 1840 by the order of the Marquis of Hastings. It is believed to have been erected on the very spot where the bodies of the slain were buried.

Mrs. Carey, the only lady mentioned in history in connection with the tragedy, was the last of the survivors. She outlived the twenty-two by many years, and died in Calcutta on March 28th, 1801. What a life hers was of suffering and sorrow !

And what of the famous Black Hole itself ? Well, it is supposed to have been demolished soon after the

day of the awful tragedy that was enacted therein, and for generations its very site was a matter of doubt. However, in the year 1883 some old papers were found in the Record Office which threw light on the subject, and the spot indicated by the papers was



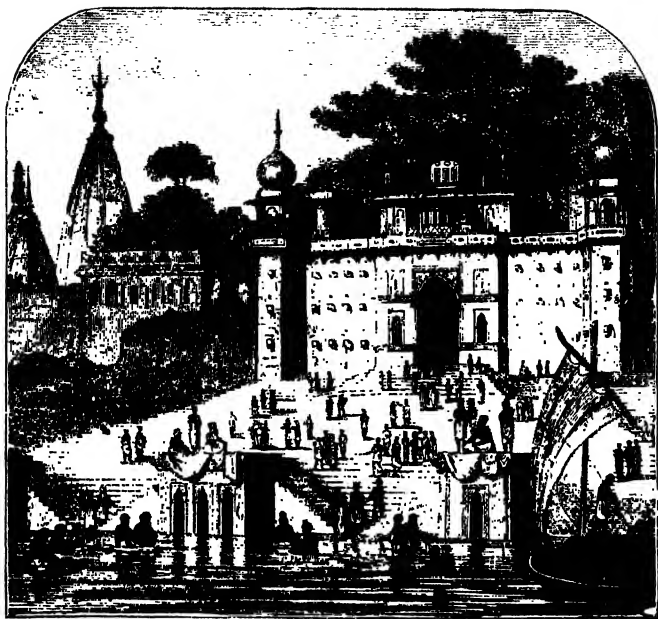
MONUMENT ONCE ON THE SITE OF THE BLACK HOLE.

excavated, with the result that the underground walls of the dungeon were discovered. I had just reached Calcutta when the discovery was made, and one of my first visits was to the spot which must ever be sacred to the memory of our gallant forefathers who

there so miserably perished. The walls were then bare, though they have been covered since with earth ; and I walked along them, and measured them, and found the building to have been barely twenty feet square.

I stayed there some time, thinking of the past, thinking of the dead, thinking of the savage young Prince, Surajah Dowlah, and of his poor victims, my own fellow-countrymen. And visitors to Calcutta to-day, if they will enter a wide gateway on one side of the General Post Office, will find a square carefully marked out in white stones, which indicate the exact spot and dimensions of the Black Hole of sad memory. The whole incident should speak to us on the one hand of the hideousness of war, and of the awful consequences of human passions uncontrolled and unrestrained ; and on the other of splendid courage, daring, and endurance.





A GHAUT AT BENARES, WITH RECESSES FOR DEVOTEES.

III.

IDOLS, IDOLS EVERYWHERE.

IF one were asked to describe India, I think the first remark that would spring from one's lips would be—"It is a land of idols! There are idols, idols everywhere!" I can well remember as a boy that at a certain missionary meeting in England, when the missionary held up two or three idols for our inspection, I greatly marvelled at the sight, and wondered whether I should ever visit India and see idolatry for myself in all its power and degradation.

And now that I have been in the East my astonishment is no whit lessened at the fact that so many millions of boys and girls, young men and maidens, and older people, human beings like ourselves, can bow down before gods of wood and stone and brass. Idolatry seems to have a fascination for the Hindus ; it is the very air they breathe ; it is the food of their souls. They are the willing slaves of custom in this respect, for the common people of India, it is easy to be seen, are passionately interested in and devoted to the worship and service of idols.

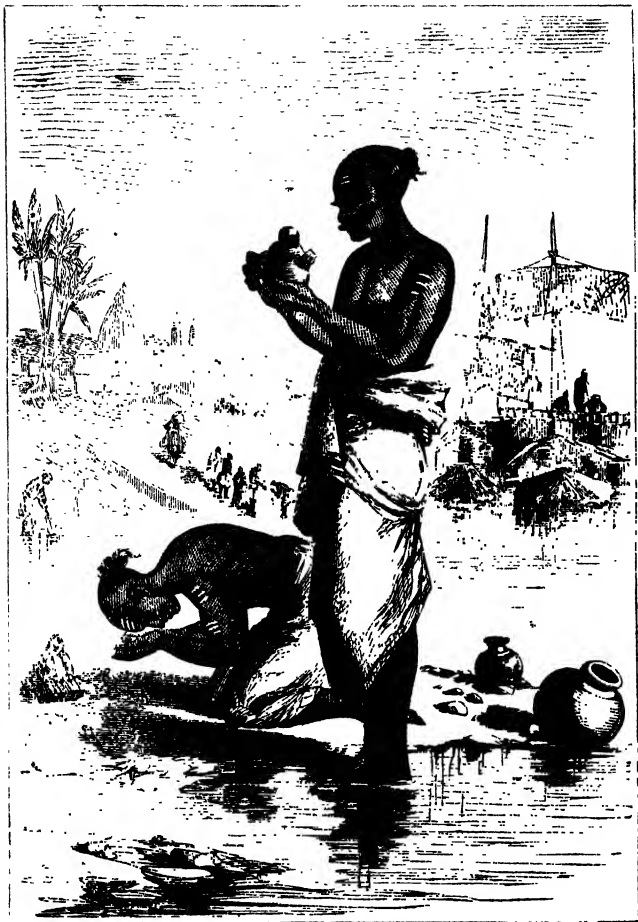
The late Rev. M. A. Sherring, of Benares, in his well-known book entitled "*The Sacred City of the Hindus*," says : " Indeed the love for idolatry is so deep-seated and intense in the breasts of the people, that it is a common thing for both men and women to amuse themselves with manufacturing little gods from mud and clay, and after paying divine honours to them, and that too with the same profound reverence which they display in their devotions before the well-known deities of the temples, to throw them away."

Mr. Sherring then gives a striking instance in proof of his assertion. He says : " One day on entering the courtyard of the temple of Annpúrná, the Goddess of Plenty, my attention was arrested by an aged woman seated on the ground in front of a small clay figure, which, I ascertained, she had with her own hands manufactured that morning, and to which she was solemnly paying homage. Close by was a brazen vessel containing water, into which every now and then she dipped a small spoon, and then gently poured

a few drops upon the head of the image. She then reverently folded her hands, and muttered words of prayer, occasionally moving one hand to her face, and with finger and thumb compressing her two nostrils, in order that, holding her breath as long as possible, she might increase the merit of her worship and the efficacy of her prayer. Having completed her devotions she rose, took the image which she had worshipped in her hands, and threw it away as of no further use."

So strong in fact in the Hindus is this passion for worshipping something they can see and handle, that they will almost use anything for an idol. I have heard of a Hindu gentleman in South India who wanted to get possession of an English doll for purposes of worship. The doll had been given by a missionary lady to a native Christian girl as a prize for good conduct at school. The little girl had carried it home, of course, and shown it to her friends with great glée, little thinking any one would wish to deprive her of it. A neighbour, an acquaintance of her father, however, having seen the doll, took a fancy to it, thinking it would make a capital idol, and tried to bribe the little girl into parting with it. The child refused, though offered the equivalent of ten shillings for it; and had the courage to tell the man that he was foolish to worship idols at all, and that he would show wisdom by putting his trust in Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world. The Hindu sharply replied, "I don't want your Christ, but only that pretty image, if you will sell it to me."

It would be impossible to compute the number of



BRAHMIN WORSHIPPING IDOLS IN THE GANGES.

idols that there must be at the present time in India. The Hindus pretend to have 333,000,000 gods, and

these are represented by innumerable idols, so that we are quite bewildered with the thought of taking the census of the idols of India. The population of the whole Indian Empire is now about 300,000,000, and probably the country contains ten times as many idols as people. The world is therefore a long way off the fulfilment of that Bible prophecy which says, "And the idols shall He utterly abolish."

Benares is the great centre of the idol-making business, though in all parts of India the trade flourishes. Potters the day through may be seen in the sacred city moulding images of clay for temporary use. Sculptors also may be found producing representations of the gods in stone or marble. Carpenters, moreover, make great wooden idols for the temples; and workers in metal—goldsmiths, coppersmiths, and brassworkers—turn out more or less highly-finished specimens in their respective metals.

"Special value," one writer says, "attaches to golden images of certain gods and goddesses, while for others, copper or brass, or an amalgam of mercury and tin, is preferred. Sitala, the goddess of Small-pox, is always represented in silver; but the most sacred of all materials for the manufacture of gods is a perfect alloy produced by mixing eight metals—viz., gold, silver, brass, lead, iron, tin, mercury, and copper."

I have heard it whispered in more than one quarter, that many of the idols that are worshipped in India are manufactured in England; but I would fain believe that the report is not correct, for I do not like to think ill of my fellow-countrymen. Miss Cumming,

in her book entitled "In the Himalayas and on the Indian Plains," speaking of some images offered to her by a vendor of idols in Benares, says, "I strongly suspect that every little idol in his basket was pure 'Brummagem,' and not without reason, for it is currently reported that Birmingham exports an immensely large proportion of the idols of Hindustan, and finds them a very profitable speculation." Again I would remark that I hope the report is incorrect. If the people of India will have idols to worship, it is certainly not for Christian England to supply them.

When speaking of idols it should be borne in mind that the images turned out by the potter, sculptor, carver, or manufacturer, are not considered sacred or fit to be worshipped, until certain mystic words have been uttered over them by a priest. The ceremony of "the giving of life," as it is called, to the image, is a very solemn affair, and when it is done the idol is regarded as holy, and must ever afterwards be approached and treated with the utmost reverence.

Out of the many millions of so-called gods in India, all of whom are counted worthy of worship, three are regarded as specially sacred, and form the Hindu Triad or Trinity. They are respectively Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. Of these, it is stated, the second person of the Trinity only has been represented on this earth by human incarnations. Through one or all of these gods the Hindus believe they may obtain salvation. Brahma represents the way of salvation by wisdom, Vishnu by faith, and Siva by works. It is immaterial which method is adopted, as they all lead to the same goal.

And from what do the Hindus wish or hope to be saved? Well, I can say, once for all, that it is not, generally speaking, from sin. "The idols are not worshipped for spiritual blessings, holiness, and aids to moral culture, but to obtain exemption from the physical evils of life—relief from sickness, victory over enemies, healthy children, wealth, good luck, worldly gain, temporal prosperity. According to the philosophical system of Hinduism, only temporal benefits are to be obtained from worshipping idols." The Hindus have not yet realised that "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Soon after I landed on Indian soil it was my lot to obtain possession of an idol, under most interesting circumstances. It was at Madras, where I had gone on shore to visit a college friend who had preceded me to India by a year or so. My friend told me how his heart had been cheered by a Hindu, whom he knew, forsaking idolatry, and becoming a follower of Christ. I rejoiced with him, and in course of conversation asked what the new convert would do with his old household idols. For reply I was asked if I would like to possess one of them, as a memento of the event, and of my visit to Madras. I promptly answered "Yes"; and my friend brought from another room a tiny brass idol, and, placing it in my hand, said, "Take it, and welcome. It was given to me by the new convert, but I am sure he will not mind my giving it to you."

The idol that I thus obtained possession of, and have yet, represents Ganesha, the god of Wisdom.

Ganesha is said to have been a son of Siva. He sits cross-legged, and has many arms ; but the strangest thing about him is that he has the head and trunk of an elephant. The story told concerning this god is, that he was originally born with a human head, but having been deprived of it by his father, in a fit of anger, his mother vowed to supply its place with the head of the first living creature she met. This proved to be an elephant ; and with the head of the elephant, Ganesha is credited with receiving the wisdom of this ungainly but sagacious animal. Ganesha is very popular in India, and his shrine may be found in every village throughout the length and breadth of the land. He is worshipped by every schoolboy, for is he not the god of wisdom, the master of caligraphy, and the patron of literature ?

The second idol that came into my possession, and this time by purchase, represents even a more popular god than Ganesha. His name is Krishna, and he is the favourite idol of all the women, as well as the boys and girls, of Hindustan. And yet from all accounts the character of this god is not of the best. The image that I own represents him as quite dark in colour—it has been suggested to me that he is painted black on account of his sins. Of this god, and especially of his escapades in the days of childhood and youth, a pretty full account will be found in a later chapter in this book.

The idols of India, it will already have been noticed, are not confined to the male sex. There are quite a number of goddesses as well as gods in the Hindu Pantheon. Perhaps the principal may be said to be

Sarasvati the wife of Brahma, Lakshmi the wife of Vishnu, and Kali the wife of Siva. The first is the goddess of Knowledge, the second of Love and Prosperity, and the third—well, it is difficult to say what she is the goddess of, for though she is familiarly called Mother Kali, she delights in blood, and revels in the sacrifice of goats and buffaloes. Kali is generally represented as standing on the body of her husband,



BRAHMA AND SARASVATI.

with her tongue protruding from her mouth, her hair hanging far down her back, and with a wreath of skulls round her neck. Truly this notorious idol is horrible to look upon, and to think about. To speak of her as "Mother" seems blasphemy. The Hindu scriptures tell some dreadful tales of her wicked doings; and if space permitted I might relate some sad stories of the infamous deeds of numbers of her worshippers, who have been robbers and murderers.

At one time it is said even little children were offered up in sacrifice to this bloodthirsty idol.

Idols are of course worshipped both privately and publicly. And both in the house and the temple they are treated with the greatest respect and the profoundest reverence. It would be amusing, if it were not so sad, to notice with what care the make-believe gods and goddesses of India are looked after both by day and night. Mr. B. Chunder, in his book entitled "The Travels of a Hindu," tells of the princely magnificence with which an image of Krishna was treated in a temple called Kundu in Bengal.

The writer says: "Of all the shrines the one at Kundu is maintained with the greatest liberality. The god here seems to live in the style of the Great Moghul. His throne and pillows are of the best velvet and damask, richly embroidered. Before him are placed gold and silver salvers, cups, tumblers, and jugs of various size and pattern. He is fed every morning with fifty kinds of curries, and ten kinds of pudding. His breakfast over, gold hookahs are brought to him to smoke the most aromatic tobacco. He then retires for his noonday nap. In the afternoon he tiffs and lunches, and at night before he goes to bed he sups upon the choicest and richest viands." The Brahmins, of course, get all these good things, though the farce is kept up of the idols having excellent appetites, so that the foolish worshippers may not be slack in finding the money for their support. When will such a mockery of religion come to an end?

The mention of the Brahmins or priests reminds me of the fact that even these gentlemen come in for a

share of worship themselves, for the common people of India look upon the members of the highest caste as veritable gods. The Brahmins are living idols, whom the lower classes are degraded enough to worship. The Hindu Scriptures say,

“Before the Brahmins bow with awe,
Esteem their every word as law,
For they shall prosper all, who treat
The Priests with filial reverence meet.

“Yea, though they servile tasks pursue,
To Brahmins high esteem is due.
For be he stolid as a clod
A Brahmin is a mighty god.”

Mr. Minturn, in his book “From New York to Delhi,” relates how he met a Brahmin who actually laid claim to divine attributes. “One day,” says the traveller, “while we were eating under a grove, a great dirty fellow, smeared with cow-dung and wearing the sacred Brahminical thread over his shoulder, with no clothing but a rag six inches wide, marched boldly up to us and asked for money. I, being paymaster, wanted to know ‘What for?’ when he answered as coolly as possible, ‘Because I am a god and am hungry.’ If I could have mastered Hindu-stanee enough I would have told him that if his divine character could not protect him from hunger it certainly should not secure him unmerited charity.”

The Hindus have a syllogism in honour of Brahmins which runs thus :

“The whole world is under the power of the *gods*,
The gods are under the power of the *mantras*,
The *mantras* are under the power of the Brahmin,
The Brahmin is therefore our God.”

The Rev. W. Ward, in his "History of the Hindus," says, "When the claims of the Brahmins to deity have been disputed by any one, I have seen the



BRAHMINS, THE HIGHEST CASTE AMONG THE INDIANS.

poor besotted Sudra prostrate himself at the feet of the nearest Brahmin, and raising his head and closing his hands, say, 'You are my god.' At the same

time the character of the Brahmin has perhaps been notorious for every vice."

Leaving the animate idol, the Brahmin, let us now return for a little space to the further consideration of inanimate idols. The Hindus have descended even to the worship of mud. Ponder over an incident related by the Rev. J. D. Bate, a Baptist missionary in India. He says: "A while ago I was making my way to a village called Lokipore, about twenty miles to the west of Allahabad, for the purpose of preaching. On emerging from a field I saw a little way in front of me what I took at first to be the dry trunk of a very tall tree that had been denuded of leaves and branches. Going a few steps nearer I thought I detected high up what had the appearance of the rude outline of a human face, but very large; and on coming close to the object I saw what it really was. It was a huge round pile of mud, dug up from a ditch near by, and dried in the sun. *It was an idol.* On the top of the pile the eyes and nose had been scratched by the finger when the mud was soft, and for a mouth there was a broad, deep gash, right across the face from one side to the other. For ears, a couple of pieces of broken pitcher had been stuck in so as to project on either side of the head and curve forwards.

"Legs there were none: it was merely a trunk built up from the ground. For arms, a couple of long pieces of bamboo had been stuck into the sides so as to project at right angles, and at the end of each of these primitive-looking limbs there was another pile of mud much smaller in its proportions: the arms were supported by these piles." The missionary stood in

amazement and sorrow before this scarecrow, thinking of the sin and shame of such idolatry, when a loud voice came from among the trees of a neighbouring flower-garden asking him why he gazed so intently upon the god. It was a Brahmin priest who spoke.

Mr. Bate answered, "A god! You call this a god?" "Yes," said the priest, "it is a god: it is holy; it has stood where it is for seven years, and it is an object of adoration to those who are looking to me for instruction and guidance in the path of salvation." Was there ever such folly? We may well say that the Hindus are given up altogether to idolatry, when they will worship anything, from a man to the mud upon the roadside.

It has been questioned whether the Hindus really regard idols as gods and goddesses. Sir Edwin Arnold, who looks through rose-coloured spectacles at everything Eastern, says that they do not. In his "India Revisited" he remarks: "All these various sacred objects are for the educated Indians mere 'aids to faith,' manifestations, more or less appropriate and elevated, of the all-pervading and undivided Para-Brahm. Even the poor peasant of the fields, and the gentle Hindu wife, perambulating a peepul-tree smeared with red, will tell you that the symbol they reverence is only a symbol. There is hardly one of them so ignorant as not to know that commonplace of Vedantism, 'Every prayer which is uttered finds its way to the ears of Kâshavâ.'"

I think that Sir Edwin Arnold is wrong, and that the common people of India are more ignorant and superstitious than he realises. Most of the lower

classes of Hindus, I am convinced, believe that when they worship idols they worship gods and goddesses, not merely as represented by the idols, but as actually dwelling in the idols. Doubtless the educated know better, and regard the idols merely as symbols, but still even they outwardly worship the symbols. Some English-speaking natives I have talked with on the subject have tried to justify their idolatry by saying, "We must have symbols to represent God to us."

The Rev. James Kennedy, in his book entitled "Life and Work in Benares," commenting on this subject, says : "Hindus who know English have quoted Cowper's address to his mother on getting her picture, 'Oh that those lips had language !' and have then asked, 'Was not Cowper helped in realising his mother when looking at her picture ?' To which there is the obvious reply, 'Cowper's mother was truly represented by her picture. Is God truly and fittingly represented by the idols the Hindus worship ?'" Surely not ! What is there in the ugly, grotesque idols of Hindustan to help any man, woman, or child in understanding God, or in worshipping God ? If men will have symbols of God as aids to faith, then let the symbols be such as will inspire lofty thoughts. In my opinion, however, we do not need symbols of gold, or silver, or wood, or stone, or mud. These material substances, experience has taught us, always foster low and materialistic views of the Divine Father. Idolatry is folly !

"Men cannot know from whence they came,
Else they would never call the sun

Or moon their God. They would not bow
To idols made of clay, or mud
Baked in the fire. No image made
Of stone or wood, no linga stump,
Built up of earth and made by hand,
Could ever seem Divine to one,
Who knew he came from God."

"How mad are they who offer praise
To carven stones! As if such things
Could fitly image God Most High."

The great work before Christian labourers in India is, then, to educate the people, especially the young people of the land, and to turn their thoughts to Christ, who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." There cannot be a doubt that the spread of Western knowledge in the East is undermining the faith of Hindus in idolatry. The education given to young men in government and missionary schools and colleges inspires in the breasts of the more thoughtful among them a thorough distaste for idolatry, and a latent desire to be free from it. A great reformer is needed. There are, I believe, tens of thousands of young Hindus ready for a wonderful change, if only a mighty leader would appear from their own race to inspire them with courage and daring.

While idolatry is still almost universal in India, we are safe, I think, in saying that in all classes of society, amongst both the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, there is less reverence for idols than of yore. A Hindu gentleman in South India said lately to a missionary, "Upwards of twenty or thirty years ago, we, both men and women, had a great reverence for idols, but that reverence is failing even

when we see them in temples, because we know now that they are nothing more than the material with which they are made—that is, wood, stone, copper, or gold. The foolishness of bygone days is gradually giving way, and things are viewed now as they actually exist. You ask, How have we come to this? I will tell you. It is through the influence of the Gospel of Christ which is being regularly preached amongst us.”

Then in North India the Rev. E. Greaves, writing not very long ago of a tour he had made in the Benares district, said: “During the last year we visited many villages, where we had been in previous years, and also went over much that was, to us, fresh ground. On some few occasions we were met by opposition and rudeness; this, however, was quite exceptional. It was inspiring now and again to hear a village group giving their assent to all that was said, and confessing that it was God alone who could save them. In one village some men said, ‘This is quite new to us, and very good; we will not worship idols any more.’ On another occasion I put my hearers’ genuineness to the test, by asking them to grant me permission to fling their idols into a pond close by. Superstition was too strong, however, and they begged me not to touch them. ‘What!’ said I, ‘could they not protect themselves if they were gods?’ The people did not dispute my logic, but declined to give me the coveted permission. God grant that the day may soon come when they will themselves break down their idols, and worship, in spirit and in truth, the great God and Saviour.”

Even from the purely native state of Hyderabad a story comes of the growing lack of faith in idols. Some lads who had been taught to read and write in a mission school, when sent out into the fields by their parents to tend cattle, tested the power of certain gods and goddesses they found by the road side, by asking them to take charge of the animals for an hour or two, while they themselves engaged in play. The little fellows found, however, to their dismay, that while their backs had been turned the cattle had wandered into forbidden ground, and had eaten up some standing corn. Conscious of their own negligence, and yet vexed with their idols for not being more watchful, the lads removed the images from their places ; and becoming still more bold, they banged one idol against another, and left the two lying ignominiously on the ground.



FIGURE OF HINDU PRAYING.
From Temple at Madura

When asked by their parents the cause of such an outrage, the bold little fellows exclaimed with one voice, " Because the gods did not

mind the cattle while we were at play ! ” The elder people waited a few days with trembling anxiety to see what disasters the gods would call down upon their households for such iniquity, but as nothing happened, a suspicion was generated all round that perhaps after all the children were right, and that the idols were powerless to do either good or harm.

Idolatry in India is doomed, for it cannot stand before the light of education spreading in the land, before the truth, “as the truth is in Jesus.” Reforms move slowly in the East, however. Christian workers must not be over-sanguine of immediate success on a large scale, but must labour on diligently, wisely, and lovingly, believing that in due season they shall reap if they faint not. It will be a glorious day for India, when the Hindus as one man shall cast their idols all away !





IV.

BUTTOO, THE FAMOUS ARCHER.

THE Land of Idols has a history going back thousands of years, and of that past we read in such Hindu works as the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Vedas, which are religious books of considerable merit, though containing a great mass of superstitious and strange, grotesque stories of the doings of gods and men.

Amongst other stories dealing with life in ancient India, I have been particularly struck with one very beautiful and human one, which I am sure my young readers will peruse with interest and delight. It is the pathetic story of Buttoo, the famous archer.

tell the tale now to show something of the manners and customs of the people of India in years long gone by, and also to serve as an illustration of three very desirable virtues which all young people should possess—viz., self-help, truth, and modesty.

Buttoo was born many centuries ago, and belonged to the lowest of the mixed orders of humankind in India. Then as now existed the hateful system of caste, which legally separates the different classes of Hindu society. Originally there were four great castes, which can be described briefly, as (1) the priestly, (2) the soldier, (3) the merchant, and (4) the servant castes. These four classes, the law says, cannot eat or drink together, cannot intermarry, and cannot even touch each other accidentally without defilement. Caste has been the curse of India, the cause of many of its bitterest woes. It has dried up the wells of human sympathy, separated man from man, and opposed itself to everything approaching wide brotherly love, leading men to say one to another: "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."

Poor Buttoo, the hero of our story, was of the lowest caste, and consequently to all who were not of the same caste he was an object to be looked upon with not a little scorn, a being to be crushed and trampled upon by proud Brahmins. From his earliest years, according to the chronicles, Buttoo had been thoughtful and rather reserved, and seemed very different from the majority of the boys who were his playmates.

And when he had passed the age of fourteen the difference became more marked. His friends could see that he was a boy who thought much, who had within him a noble soul, and who was evidently seeking earnestly to be good and great.

The grand ambition of youth at the time Buttoo lived was to be skilful in all warlike pursuits. The state of the country was very unsettled, and men were suspicious of their neighbours, and safety for life and property lay in being able to defend them. And the road to wealth and fame was the trade of war. Now Buttoo, though different from many youths in the majority of things, was at one with them in desiring to be a mighty warrior, whose name should be known far and wide. Only he desired that his path to glory might not be sullied with any cruelty or any crime. As a hunter's son, of course, he was early trained in the use of various weapons, and especially in the use of the bow, with which he became exceedingly skilful. Amongst his companions few could equal him in skill in archery, and none could beat him.

But skilful as the young man became he was not satisfied, for stories reached him of still more marvellous skill to which many youths of the higher castes had attained. From one quarter, in particular, news came which set his heart on fire and which made him long to leave his home that he might see, and if possible imitate, the exploits of others.

Of all the great teachers of archery of whom Buttoo could hear anything, the mighty Drona was the acknowledged head and chief. And Drona was the teacher of the Bharata princes, whose capital city

was Hastinapore. For years Drona had been giving lessons to the royal youths, and had brought them to a wonderful state of proficiency. But though all the princes were skilful, one, Arjuna by name, far eclipsed his brethren, and was the joy of his old teacher's heart. Let us take, by way of example, one occasion when Arjuna's superiority was shown. Drona one day gathered his pupils together, and declared that he wanted to test their abilities. Fixing an artificial vulture on the top of a neighbouring tree, he said, "Children, take up your bows quickly, and stand here aiming at that bird on the tree, with arrows fixed on your bow-strings; shoot and cut off the bird's head as soon as I give the order. I shall give each of you a turn, one by one."

Yudhisthira, the eldest, was the first to step forward, and stood aiming at the bird as his preceptor directed. Then came the question: "Dost thou behold, O Prince, that bird on the top of the tree?" "I do," was the answer. But when asked again, "What dost thou now see? seest thou the tree, myself, or thy brothers?" Yudhisthira replied, "I see the tree, thyself, my brothers, and the bird." And no matter how often the question was asked, the same answer was given by the prince, until the preceptor was annoyed, and said sharply, "Stand thou aside, thou canst not hit the bird." Then the other princes, except Arjuna, were called forward, but in every case the same words were uttered: "We behold the tree, thyself, our fellow-pupils, and the bird." At last came the turn of Arjuna, and Drona looking upon him smilingly said, "By thee the bird must be hit—

get ready ; but first tell me, seest thou the bird there, the tree, and myself ? ”

And Arjuna replied, “ I see the bird only, but not the tree or thyself.” Then the preceptor laughed, and pleasantly asked again, “ If thou seest the vulture, then describe it to me.” And Arjuna answered, “ I only see the head of the vulture, which thou hast commanded me to hit, and not its body.” At these words Drona was beside himself with pride in his pupil’s skill. “ Shoot ! ” he cried, “ Shoot ! ” and the sharpened shaft from the young man’s bow went straight to its mark, and down upon the ground fell the head of the vulture ; and Arjuna was declared the prince of archers. Then Drona, the preceptor, vowed, earnestly and solemnly, that no living being should surpass Arjuna in skill.

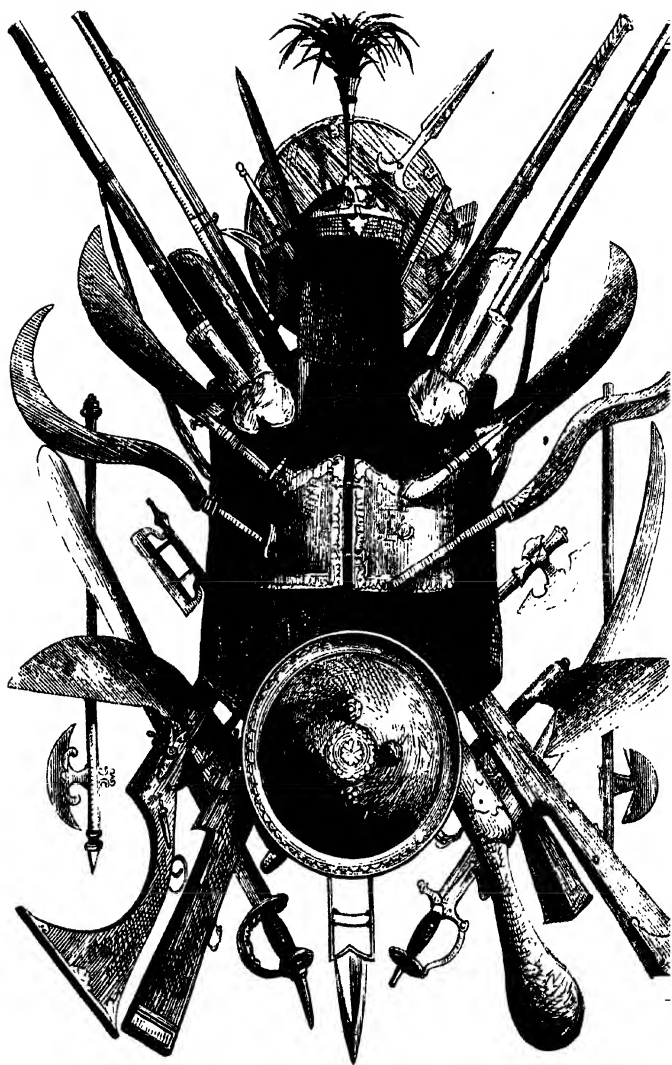
Wonderful deeds of the kind just mentioned reached the ears of the low-caste Buttoo, and he said to himself that what man had done man could do ; and one day he left his home and his father and his friends, and went forth to visit Hastinapore, to pray the mighty Drona to become his instructor also. See our hero then, his journey over, in the presence of the great preceptor as he sat surrounded by the princes. And marching boldly forward, he declared, in reverent yet manly words, that hearing of the fame of Drona and his pupils, he had come to seek his guidance also in the use of the bow.

“ And who art thou ? ” the teacher said. “ My name is Buttoo,” replied the youth, “ a hunter’s son.” And then a laugh of scorn broke on his ears. The great teacher was laughing, and the princes were

laughing ; all were laughing together, to think that such a low-born boy should come into their city and presence with such a request. And with words of bitter reproach they bade him be gone, and not show his face to them again. And the lad made reverent obeisance to the preceptor, and turned with flushed cheeks yet with calm dignity away :—

“ And lo,—a single, single tear
Dropped from his eyelash as he past ;
‘ My place, I gather, is not here :
No matter,—what is rank or caste ?
In us is honour, or disgrace,
Not out of us,’—twas thus he mused.
‘ The question is,—not wealth or place,
But gifts well used, or gifts abused.
And I shall do my best to gain
The science that man will not teach,
For life is as a shadow vain,
Until the utmost goal we reach
To which the soul points.’ ”

Were these not brave and noble words, and who could doubt that such a youth would become famous ! And famous Buttoo did become, though not just in the way that one might have expected. From the presence of Drona and the scoffing princes the low-born but high-souled Buttoo passed into the forest. Of home he did not think for a moment, for he had resolved that he would not return thither until his name was honoured even by the great ones of the earth. In the forest he built himself a little hut in which to dwell, and near the hut he carved out for himself an image of the great teacher who had cast him off, yet whom he still revered.



INDIAN WEAPONS OF WAR.

And the image was so skilfully worked that any one seeing it might have thought for a moment that the teacher in his flesh was there. And when Buttoo had completed his task he knelt down before the figure, and in his zeal hailed it as his master. And from that hour he devoted himself to archery, and archery alone. Day by day he practised with his bow at marks set up by himself, and at birds and animals in the forest; and with such enthusiasm, perseverance, and patience did he labour, that in the course of time he attained unheard-of and almost undreamt-of skill. Even high-caste Arjuna could not now hope to hold his own in archery against low-born Buttoo. And thus did Buttoo show clearly to the youths of his own time, and to the youths of all time, that by *self-help* even those in a lowly station in life and placed in adverse circumstances may yet win for themselves an honourable position in the world, and the respect and admiration of their fellows.

But the story of Buttoo's life is not yet ended. There came a day when the princes from Hastinapore went into the wood, where Buttoo dwelt, on a hunting expedition. With them they took a beautiful and favourite dog; and ere the day declined this dog had found out the presence of Buttoo, and thereupon set up a most terrific barking. It may be that even the aristocratic dog, learning evil from its masters, was offended at the sight of a low-caste boy like Buttoo. Be that as it may, it barked so loudly and so fiercely that Buttoo was well-nigh distracted; and the princes just then appearing on the scene, he resolved to show his skill and to obtain quiet by shooting an arrow

from his bow into the mouth of the dog. In a moment the deed was done, and before the dog could close its mouth, six other arrows were sent with such speed that they also entered. And the tongue of the dog was fastened to its jaw : and, the story adds, though the seven arrows remained in its mouth, no pain was felt, but perfect silence was obtained.

Struck with astonishment at such marvellous shooting, the princes were speechless, and turned away with haste and dismay. All felt that Buttoo was their superior, and they were angry and envious. Arjuna, in particular, was white with rage, and hurried home to find his teacher, that he might tell him what had happened, and reproach him with breaking the promise he had once made, that no one living should excel the young prince in skill with the bow.

Drona quieted the envious and enraged Arjuna with the words, "What I said still stands good : let us go and see this wonderful youth in the forest." And soon they stood before the statue which adjoined the hut ; and from the lowly dwelling-place stepped forth Buttoo, still noble-looking, still respectful, and with a smile of welcome on his face. "What means this statue ?" said the teacher. And the youth explained that not being permitted to have the living person as his master, he had carved out his image, that by looking at it he might obtain inspiration.

Drona listened well pleased, for the homage was flattering, but yet he was troubled, as he thought of Buttoo's skill and his own promise to Arjuna. Meditating for some time, he saw only one way, and a very painful way, out of the difficulty. Turning to

Buttoo the teacher said, "If I am thy master, now thou hast finished thy course, give me my fee, and let all the past be dead and passed, and henceforth let us form fresh ties."

And the youth answered—

"All that I have, O master mine,
All I shall conquer by my skill,
Gladly shall I to thee resign,
Let me but know thy gracious will."

"Beware! beware!" exclaimed the teacher, "rash promises often end in strife."

But Buttoo in his great generosity protested his sincerity, and his willingness to do anything :—

"Thou art my master--ask! oh, ask!
From thee my inspiration came,
Thou canst not set too hard a task,
Nor ought refuse I free from blame."

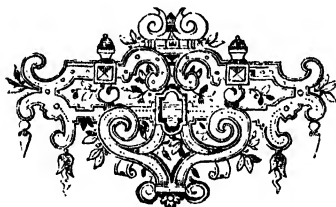
"Then listen," said Drona; "thou seest this prince Arjuna. I promised him once that no other archer should be as great as he. Thou art already greater than he, and only by thine own act can thy skill be spoiled. Thou hast promised to give me as my fee anything I choose to ask. I ask then, O Buttoo! for thy right-hand thumb, that thumb whose light touch enabled thee to shoot so wonderfully. Canst thou now keep thy word? What sayest thou?"

Buttoo answered not by words but by deeds—

"Glanced the sharp knife one moment high,
The severed thumb was on the sod;
There was no tear in Buttoo's eye,
He left the matter with his God."

And thus the story ends. Doubtless the poor lad went back to his home and to his father and kindred, but he went not back a great archer, for "his right hand had lost its cunning." However, "greater is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." While the world lasts, O Buttoo! thou shalt be remembered :—

"Fame
Shall sound thy praise from sea to sea,
And men shall ever link thy name
With self-help, truth, and modesty."





THE GYAN KUP, BENARÉS.

V.

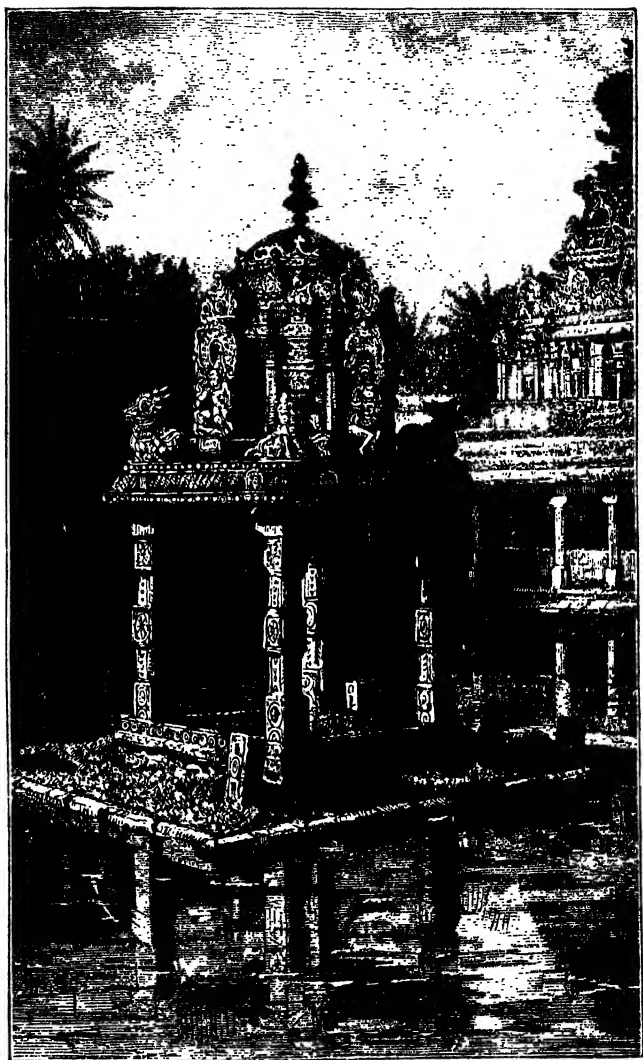
HOLY TANKS AND WELLS.

A VERY attractive feature of social life in India is the daily practice of going to the tank or well for the supply of water needed for drinking and other household purposes. Except in a few of the large cities there are no water-pipes and taps in the houses of the people. Water-supply companies are a luxury of Western lands, and are as yet almost unknown in the East. As a consequence, of course, all the water that is used in the home must be brought

from the river, if there happen to be one at hand, or from the wells or tanks that are to be found in the neighbourhood of all towns and villages; for the Hindus are a water-loving people.

It is a sight to be remembered to have stood anywhere near a tank or well in India, at any hour of the day, but more especially at the outgoings of morning and evening, and to have watched the boys and girls, the young men and maidens, and older people, either bathing in the tank or drawing water from the well. The wells are the general meeting-places of village life, where the older women gossip, and where the young ones show off their finery and chatter about acquaintances and friends, and about the delights of the previous day, or the anticipated joys of the morrow.

All foreign residents in India, or strangers who have travelled through the country, speak in glowing terms of the tanks and wells around which they saw gathered the common people of the land dressed in bright apparel, and usually with faces beaming with smiles of recognition and welcome. Mr. Minturn, in his book, describing his travels "From New York to Delhi," says: "The public wells are among the prettiest objects in the towns and villages of Hindustan. They are generally octagonal stone platforms, raised four or five feet from the ground, and approached by four flights of steps. Four stone columns over the well's mouth support cross-pieces, from which the pulley is suspended. In Bengal no pulley is used. In the North of India generally, the women draw and carry the water."



THE SACRED POOLS, TRICHINOPOLY.

Miss Cumming, in her book on India, says : " I was particularly attracted by some very fine wells in Allahabad, to which the people descend by a broad flight of steps into a world of cool shadow, so pleasant after the glaring sunlight that one feels tempted to linger a while with those groups of water-carriers who are filling their buffalo skins from the deep well far below, for the use of ordinary mortals. The higher castes, however, would be defiled by water that had been drawn in a leathern bucket, which being an animal substance is unclean ; therefore each man and woman of the higher castes brings his or her own brightly polished brazen lota or jug, which by means of a long cord is lowered to the well. The whole scene is fresh and clean and pleasant."

Many of the finest wells of India are presented to a town or village by some wealthy citizen, for the use of the wayfarer and the poor. It is considered a meritorious thing so to do, and the religion of the Hindus promises untold joys hereafter to the man or woman who shall be charitable enough to provide facilities on earth for the poor to obtain copious supplies of water for social and religious requirements.

Wells in India are usually made in the same way as wells in country places in England, by digging in the ground till water is found, and then supporting the sides of the excavation with stones from the bottom to the top. Bishop Heber, however, in the Diary of his Travels in the East, tells of a very strange way of making wells that he saw in Raiputana, where the ground is very sandy and yielding. He says :

“The people build a tower of masonry of the diameter required, and twenty or thirty feet high from the surface of the ground. This they allow to stand a year or more till its masonry is rendered firm and compact by time ; then they gradually undermine it, and promote its sinking into the sandy soil, which it does without any difficulty, and all together. When level with the surface, the workmen raise the wall higher, and so go on, throwing out the sand and raising the wall till they have reached the water. If they adopted our method the soil is so light that it would fall in on them before they could possibly raise the wall from the bottom ; nor without the wall could they sink to any considerable depth.”

Is it not a very singular thing to think of a tower that has been built above the ground, gradually sinking underground and becoming a well? Really, according to our Western way of looking at things, all seems to be turned topsyturvy in the East. I know some boys and girls who would dearly love to watch the process of making wells in Rajputana on the wall-sinking-in principle. What shouts of delight would go up from their young throats as the tower gradually disappeared underground !

Tanks and wells are used in India for special religious purposes as well as for household purposes. It should be borne in mind that Hindus must worship before daring to break their morning fast, and they cannot worship until they have washed themselves and their scanty raiment. Yea, washing, either in the river, the tank, or the well, is a part of Hindu worship ; it is an outward ceremonial cleansing that

must be gone through the first thing every morning. Of course we in Europe wash ourselves directly we arise from bed ; but it is not binding upon us as a religious duty, as it is upon the Hindus. We wash ourselves for cleanliness, and for the health and vigour



SACRED TANK AND
ISLAND.

which the application of water brings to us. I am afraid the people of

India, however, are not so particular about cleanliness, for I have seen them wash themselves in very filthy water. With many of the Hindus the main idea of visiting the tank for washing purposes seems to be

just to fulfil the law which says, "He that will not wash, neither shall he eat."

While all the wells and tanks of India are regarded by the people with a considerable degree of reverence, there are some which are actually counted holy or sacred, and that are visited to obtain special blessings and favours from the gods. One of the oldest of these holy tanks is to be found in that part of India called the Punjab, or the Land of the Five Rivers. The tank is known by the name of Rinmochan, which means "debt-freeing." Now the Hindus are all too prone to buy things which they have not enough ready money to pay for, and thus they run into debt. It is a very bad practice, and a very foolish one, for it always means disaster and trouble in the long run. And the so-called "debt-freeing" tank has been originated by the wily priests of India to draw visitors and worshippers on the vain pretext that by immersion in the sacred waters the pilgrims will somehow or other be freed from the payment of all their debts.

The tank, Rinmochan, is a square of nearly five hundred yards, and the north and west banks are faced with stone steps. It is said that hundreds gather around it daily from all parts of India, and after bathing in its holy waters, and paying a fee to the priests, go back to their homes with light hearts, perfectly sure that the gods will pay their debts for them. However, in course of time their eyes are opened to the folly of their pilgrimage, for their debts are not paid, and their creditors proceed to law against them, and there is trouble upon trouble. The priests are

the only people who profit by the debt-freeing holy tank in the Land of the Five Rivers.

There is another very holy and famous tank in the Punjab, called the "Honey Tank" ; though why it has received the title of Honey, no man knoweth. It is anything but a sweet place, according to all accounts. It is described as a shallow and stagnant pool, and in the hot weather the stench from it is quite overpowering. Perhaps it was a wag, disgusted with the bad odour of the water, that christened it in mockery the "Honey Tank." However, tens of thousands of people visit it, and bathe in its waters ; some even have been known to drink the noxious fluid, and pretend that it was sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. The water is said to be a cure for all kinds of diseases.

Brahmin priests are of course in charge of this tank also, to fleece the credulous pilgrims out of their money. They do not always succeed, however, as the following tale will show. In 1876 a great man, a Raja or Prince, resolved to bathe in the holy and sacred "Honey Tank," and made great preparations for his journey, taking with him a considerable sum of money to give to the priests at the close of the pilgrimage. As it happened, however, the tank, owing to the intense heat that year, was quite dry. The Raja knowing nothing of the lack of water, and the priests not wishing to lose the anticipated treasure, it was resolved to draw water to supply the lack from a neighbouring well. Setting to work with feverish haste, the priests were not as careful as usual to notice what utensils were used for the conveyance of the

water ; and when the work was completed, it was actually found that a workman had been carrying the precious fluid in a leathern vessel.

By this deed of course the water was polluted ; but as there was no time to change the contaminated and defiled liquid for some that was fresh and pure, the priests resolved to keep their own counsel, and let the Raja bathe in it, and drink it. However, the secret leaked out somehow, and news was carried to the Prince by some busybody of what the Brahmins had been doing. We can better imagine than describe the dismay, the horror, and the anger of the Raja at the receipt of the tidings. He was beside himself with rage : but he dared do nothing to the sacred persons of the Brahmins, and so he had to content himself with returning to his own territories with the ceremony unperformed.

However, that was enough punishment for the avaricious priests, for the thought of the money they had lost was gall and wormwood to them, and it was many a long day before they recovered their spirits. Moreover, to make matters worse, the whole district got to know the joke, and the Brahmins became the laughing-stock of the community. Let us hope that the exposure helped to open the eyes of the people to the folly of the whole business of visiting the " Honey Tank " for purposes of worship.

At Delhi, the ancient capital of India, there are many sacred tanks and wells. I remember one in particular that I saw when I visited that city, called Nizam-ud-din's Well, which was excavated in the year 1321. It is a reservoir of water of oblong shape, about sixty

feet long by thirty broad, and very deep. The well is said to have miraculous powers of healing. Whether useful for medicinal purposes or not, the saint's tank—for Nizam-u-din was a famous Moslem saint—was a capital place to witness some splendid diving on the part of lads and young men.

On our arrival at the tank we found half a dozen young fellows standing in a row on a high wall, from sixty to seventy feet above the surface of the water, waiting for a signal to spring into the tank. "Hab a dive, sir?" was the cry they greeted us with; by which they meant, "We will dive if you will promise us a liberal backsheesh." The money was promised, and in a moment one young fellow, joining his hands over his head, and opening wide his legs, made a leap. It seemed a risky thing to do, but the diver was absolutely fearless, and accomplished the feat in gallant style. Just before touching the water, he brought his legs sharply together, and throwing up his hands, he disappeared with a splash into the dark cold tank.

Then another youth sprang off the wall, and another, and another, until all the six were immersed in the waters of the sacred well. With considerable curiosity and admiration we looked for their reappearance, and we had not long to wait. In a few minutes the young acrobats had clambered out of the well, and stood before us dripping from head to foot, and with teeth chattering at a fearful rate. The next moment they departed well satisfied to resume their clothing.

At Allahabad also there is a holy well, which was made sacred by a Mussulman saint. This famous well is commonly called "The Well of the Magic

Carpet," and is to be found adjoining the noisy public market of the town. It is a very deep well, and from the bottom to the top its sides are built up with strong masonry. It was during the sad days of the Indian Mutiny, of which I shall speak in a later chapter, that this well became famous. It was on this wise.

One day there came to Allahabad a so-called saintly man of the Moslem religion, who aspired to be a leader in the rebellion against the English. He set up his standard in the town, and declared a holy war against "the Infidels." Very few people took any notice of the stranger, and those who did asked him mockingly what proofs of ability to lead men to victory he could show. Thereupon the saint walked calmly to the chief well of the town, threw his prayer-carpet across the mouth of the well, and then deliberately stepped on to it, and sat down cross-legged. Like wildfire the news spread through the streets of Allahabad that a saint who could work miracles had visited the city, and at that moment was sitting on the mouth of the well, without falling in. The whole populace turned out to see the wonderful sight, and being convinced that the stranger was a holy man indeed, many people joined his standard, but only to share in the destruction which came upon all who took up the sword of rebellion.

How the saint managed to deceive the people in the matter of the carpet over the mouth of the well we cannot say, but it was doubtless by some conjuring trick. However, the people of Allahabad had faith in the man, and ever afterwards referred to the event as a miraculous one; and to this day the well is

called "The Well of the Magic Carpet," and it is resorted to, and its waters drunk by thousands, with the conviction that in so doing they will obtain the blessing of the departed saint.



VISHNU. (FROM A NATIVE PICTURE.)

From Allahabad, the Moslem "City of Allah," let us go to Benares, the sacred city of the Hindus, and in the latter place there are to be found innumerable wells and tanks of wonderful renown. I would refer,

however, only to two of them. First and foremost is a tank with a long name. It is called Manikarnika Kund, or the Tank of the Ear-ring. The Hindus speak of Benares as the Crown of the World, and this tank as its brightest jewel. It got its name, so the story goes, in a very remarkable way.

The god Vishnu, to oblige mankind, is said to have dug the tank, and to have filled it with perspiration from his own body. Then while he was sitting on the tank, looking with pleasure at his handiwork, another god, named Siva, appeared, and promised his friend any boon he might ask. Vishnu replied that he could not think of, or desire, any greater blessing than to enjoy the constant companionship of Siva himself. So gratified was Siva with this answer that his body shook with delight, and an ear-ring called Manikarnika dropped from his ear into the well. Thus came the well to be called "The Tank of the Ear-ring." It is a foolish story, but then nearly all Hindu stories are foolish.

So famous is Manikarnika Kund that it is said five or six hundred persons bathe in it daily, and at the time of eclipses of the sun or moon, and on other special occasions, the crowds that throng it are enormous. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims bathe in its waters yearly, and vainly imagine that by so doing all their sins are washed away. The late Rev. John Hewlett, M.A., of Benares, who has written a most interesting account of this famous well of Hindu mythology, tells how one day, when he happened to visit the tank with some English friends, a sad-looking native came up to him with clasped hands, in

a suppliant posture, entreating him to interfere on his behalf, adding that he had travelled six hundred miles to bathe in the sacred waters, but that the Brahmins would not allow him to do so.

Mr. Hewlett spoke to one of the priests who stood by, and asked why the man was denied the privilege he coveted. The angry reply was, "Because he wants to bathe in the tank without giving a suitable offering." This afforded the missionary an opportunity, which he gladly embraced, of telling the disappointed pilgrim, and the crowd that soon gathered round, of Jesus Christ, the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, through whom all could obtain the washing of regeneration without money and without price, and become holy and blessed for ever.

From the Tank of the Ear-ring it is not a long walk to another very famous well of Benares, called Gyan Kup, or the Well of Knowledge. This well is very different from Manikarnika Kund. The latter is in the form of an oblong, with steps down to the water on two sides, whereas the former is circular in shape, and altogether without steps. Gyan Kup is also a small well, being only about seven feet across; while the Tank of the Ear-ring is a large well, being twenty-two feet in length, and eight in breadth. What the Well of Knowledge lacks in length and breadth it makes up, however, in depth. It is also attractive-looking, being surrounded by a handsome, low-roofed colonnade, the stone pillars of which are in four rows, and are upwards of forty in number. This colonnade is of recent date, having been erected in 1828, by the widow of a Raja of Gwalior.

The well itself is said to be of fabulous age, and it is renowned because it is believed to contain the remains of an idol of Siva, which was taken from the Golden Temple adjoining, and thrown into the water by that bigoted Mohammedan Emperor, Aurungzebe, whose delight was to destroy the idols of his Hindu subjects.

Gyan Kup is the favourite well of the young people of India, for they believe that a draught of its waters will make them learned and wise. Therefore it is called "The Well of Knowledge." On special festival occasions Gyan Kup, like Manikarnika Kund, is literally besieged with worshippers, who have difficulty in presenting their offerings, and obtaining a little of the water ; and even at ordinary times there is quite a large gathering of people.

The usual offerings that are thrown into the well as a sacrifice to the deity who is supposed to dwell below, are Ganges water, flowers, and fruits. At one time, and not very long ago, all the things thrown in reached the water, and from the compound mixture, which was of course in a constant state of putrefaction, there arose a most sickening smell. Now, however, a net is stretched across the top of the well to catch the offerings of the worshippers ; and I noticed that only small flowers could drop through, and very few of those did actually fall to the water while I remained watching.

By the side of the well on a raised seat sat a Brahmin, quite a youth, and to him my attention was called, as he was evidently the master of the ceremonies for one day at least. He was an intelligent-

looking lad, and had a smile and a word for everybody. I should think he was not more than fifteen years of age, and yet he was attending to his duties in a methodical and business-like way which called out one's admiration. And what were his duties? Just glance at the utensils around him and you will speedily know. Behind him was a bucket with a long chain attached to it. In front of him was a cask filled with water, and in his hands was a big ladle. Watch the people after they have been to the well and thrown in their offerings, and you will see that they march round to where this young man sits in priestly state.

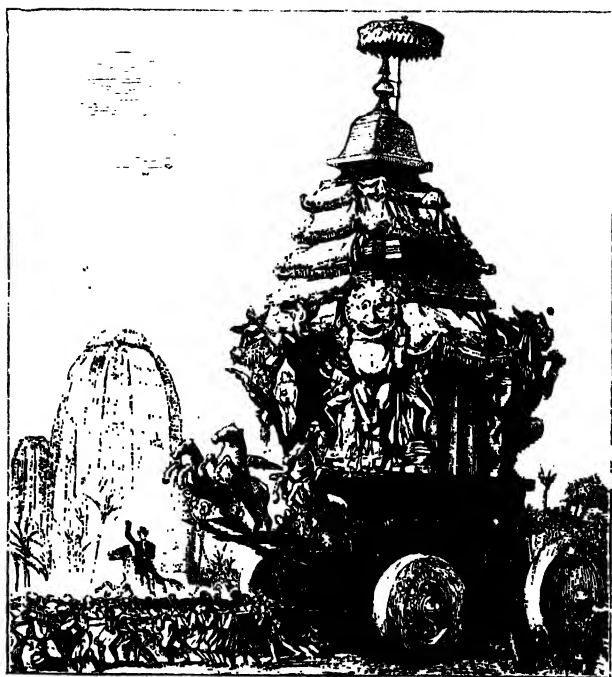
Worshippers of all ages, both male and female, draw near to the youth, and passing in single file hold out the right hand, which is immediately supplied with water from the big ladle. This is drunk without hesitation, whether it be clear or dirty, and the hand is held out again, and being again supplied with the holy water of the well, the head is now sprinkled; and the worshipper hugs to his heart the false assurance that he is thereby made wise unto salvation. Oh the folly of such absolution from sin! and yet the people I saw at the Well of Knowledge seemed content with it. Ere the worshipper leaves he is expected to give money—either copper, or silver, or gold—to the priest; and to the boy-priest this part of the proceedings seemed of the utmost importance. His bright eyes got brighter as his gains got larger, and as the people crowded around him he flourished his ladle with increasing alacrity and vigour.

But how sad it is to think of priests, whether boys or men, ladling out wisdom and salvation! Is not

our Christian conception of Divine truth grander and more ennobling than the Hindu notion? Our Well of Knowledge is the Holy Bible. Our only hope is in Jesus, the Water of Life, who has said, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." If Christ sat in the flesh to-day beside Gyan Kup at Benares as He once sat on the Well of Jacob at Samaria, He would say to the Hindus as He said to the woman of Samaria, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Our missionaries in India need our sympathy, our prayers, and our generous help, in their laborious work of persuading the people of India to turn away their faith from holy tanks and wells, to the Sacred Person of Christ, the Word of God, who alone is able to make men wise unto salvation.





FESTIVAL OF JUGGERNAUT.

VI.

THE WORSHIP OF JUGGERNAUT.

SITUATED on the sandy shores of Orissa, washed by the wild waves of the Bay of Bengal, stands the well-known Temple of Juggernaut, containing the god who is called, by the people of India, the Lord of the World.

This Temple of Juggernaut at Puri is one of the

largest and most famous temples of the East. It is within a sacred enclosure, and is protected from prying eyes by a massive stone wall 20 feet high, 652 feet long, and 630 feet broad. There are many other temples all around, but the great pagoda of the Lord of the World stands towering over the rest. "Its conical tower rises like an elaborately carved sugar loaf, 192 feet high, black with time, and surmounted by the mystic wheel and flag of Vishnu."

The temple consists of four large chambers, opening one into the other. The first is called the Hall of Offerings, where the worshippers deposit the presents they have brought in honour of the idol. The second is called the Pillared Hall, and is devoted to the musicians and the dancing-girls who frequent the temple. The third is the Hall of Audience, in which the pilgrims assemble to gaze upon the face of the god. And the fourth is the Holy Sanctuary itself, the room in which Juggernaut sits in great state to receive his worshippers.

It should be mentioned, perhaps, at this stage, that the famous idol is never alone, but has the constant companionship of a brother and sister. All three images are nothing but huge logs of wood coarsely fashioned into human shape, but without arms or legs. The priests say, when questioned about the absence of such useful members of the body, that the Lord of the World does not need them for his purposes amongst men. Such appendages would have improved the appearance of the images, however. As it is, the mighty Juggernaut and his relatives are about as ugly, senseless-looking idols as could possibly be imagined.

The worship of Juggernaut dates back, it would appear, nearly two thousand years, and Orissa has been the Holy Land of the Hindus from that time till the present day. Sir William Hunter says, "On the inhospitable sands of Puri, a place of swamps and inundations, the Hindu religion and Hindu superstition have stood at bay for eighteen centuries against the world. Here is the national temple whither the people flock to worship from every province of India. Here is the gate of heaven, whither thousands of pilgrims come to die, lulled to their last sleep, by the roar of the eternal ocean."

Now what is there about this god Juggernaut that should lead the people of India to yearn after a sight of him with such intense solicitude? Let us get to know all we can of his history and reputed character. Juggernaut, we are told, is just Vishnu, the second person of the Hindu Trinity, in one of his earthly forms. The story goes that ages ago a good king who lived in Málwa sent out priests to the east, and to the west, and to the north, and to the south in search of Vishnu, who, it was commonly reported, had come to this earth to dwell amongst men. The priests who went to the west and to the north and to the south returned, but he who went to the east returned not.

And why not? The fact is the priest had been kept a prisoner in Orissa, in the house of a certain man named Bāsu, who was a fowler of the wilderness. Bāsu had taken a fancy to the stranger, and was determined to marry him to his daughter. For a time the priest refused his consent, but at last, pleased

with his intended wife, if not with her father, he resigned himself to his fate and married her. Now Bàsu was the possessor of the very idol which the good king had sent the priest to find. The latter noticed that his father-in-law went every morning into the jungle to worship, taking with him fruits and flowers, but he could not tell where exactly he went, or what it was precisely that he worshipped. So one morning, prompted by curiosity, he expressed his willingness to accompany Bàsu, and the latter consented on condition that he went blindfold, which he agreed to.

After a long walk the two men reached their destination, and the eyes of the priest having been unbound he beheld Vishnu in the form of a blue stone image, propped up against a fig-tree. Presently the old man left his son-in-law alone, whereupon the Brahmin prayed to the Lord of the World and worshipped him. The legend says further: And as he poured out his heart a crow that sat rocking herself upon a branch above, fell down before the god, and suddenly taking a glorious form soared into the heavens. The Brahmin seeing how easy the path to eternal bliss appeared to be from that holy spot, climbed into the tree, and would have thrown himself down, but a voice from heaven cried, "Hold, Brahmin! First carry to thy king the good news that thou hast found the Lord of the World." At the same moment Bàsu came back with his newly-gathered fruits and flowers, and spread them out before the image. But, alas! the god came not, according to his wont, to partake of the offering. Only a voice was heard

saying, "Oh, faithful servant, I am wearied of thy jungle fruits and flowers, and crave for cooked rice and sweetmeats. No longer shalt thou see me in the form of thy blue god. Hereafter I shall be known as Juggernaut, the Lord of the World !"

After these strange events, the story says, the two men wended their way homewards, and the Brahmin was permitted to return to his king to tell the glad tidings that the Lord of the World had been found. Then the King of Málwa rejoiced exceedingly, and with a great army and an immense retinue of followers, made his way to Orissa to see Juggernaut. As he drew near the place where the idol was to be found his heart swelled within him with pride; and he cried aloud, "Who is like unto me, whom the Lord of the World has chosen to build his temple, and to teach men in this age of darkness to call upon his name?"

Such proud words displeased the idol, however, and a voice was heard from the clouds saying, "Oh, King! thou shalt indeed build my temple, but me thou shalt not behold. When the building is finished then thou shalt seek anew for thy god." And lo, when the priest led the monarch to the fig-tree, the blue idol was not to be found. It had vanished into space.

The King, obedient to the heavenly voice, we are told, built a magnificent temple at Puri, and when it was finished, sent forth Brahmins once more in every direction in the land to search for the lost idol, but years upon years passed by, and Juggernaut still was not found. At length, however, the god, when he had sufficiently humbled the proud king, appeared to him in a vision of the night, and said to him, "To-morrow,

cast thine eyes on the sea-shore, when there will arise from the water a piece of wood fifty-two inches long and eighteen inches broad. That is my true form. Take me up and keep me in hiding twenty-one days, and in whatever shape I shall then appear, place me in the temple thou hast built and worship me."

On the morrow the King went down to the sea-shore in hot haste, and there sure enough was a great block of wood which the waves had cast up. This he took home with him. It proved to be as hard as stone ; and when some of his carpenters put their chisels on the wood the iron lost its edge, and when they struck it with their mallets they only bruised their own hands. So the King had the unshapen block placed in a room of his palace, and he issued a decree that no human being should see it until the stipulated twenty-one days had expired. However, the curiosity of the Queen, who had heard the story, was aroused, and she somehow managed to open the door of the strong room ; and, lo ! when she looked in she found the great block of wood had become three blocks, and that the three blocks represented three images, carved however only from the waist upwards. One was Juggernaut, and the other two his brother and sister.

Thus the curiosity of a woman, the Hindus say, led to the Lord of the World having no proper arms, only stumps, and no legs at all. If the Queen had only restrained her inquisitiveness until the end of the twenty-one days, it is believed that Juggernaut would have appeared to the world in a form of exquisite grace and beauty, instead of in his present very

imperfect and uncouth condition. However, the King made the best of his idol-god, and had him placed along with his relatives in the holy chamber at Puri, where he is to be found at the present day, by all true believers, on payment of the customary fees to the priests. Such is the mythological origin and history of Juggernaut, the Lord of the World.

The present temple was built in the year 1198. The present idol, moreover, it might be noted, is believed to contain within it some mysterious substance, which has been variously described as the bones of Krishna, a box of quicksilver, and small pieces of the original idol. What the truth is only the priests can say, and they keep their own counsel. With regard to the title, "Lord of the World," the worshippers of Juggernaut declare that it is well deserved, because all classes and conditions of men are welcomed to Puri to look upon the face of the renowned idol. Juggernaut is a public god, and an immensely popular one; and it certainly is a remarkable fact that people of all castes visit the idol, and eat the food that is prepared in his temple, a thing that is not done in any other temple throughout the length and breadth of India.

Sir William Hunter makes the following remarkable statements on this point. He says, in his valuable book on Orissa: "The true source of Juggernaut's undying hold upon the Hindu race consists in the fact that he is the god of the people. As long as his towers rise upon the Puri sands, so long will there be in India a perpetual and visible protest of the equality of men before God. His apostles pene-

trate to every hamlet of Hindustan, preaching the sacrament of the holy food. The poor outcast learns from Juggernaut's priests that there is a city on the far eastern shore in which high and low eat together. In his own village, if the outcast man accidentally touches the clothes of a man of good caste, he has committed a crime, and his outraged superior has to wash away the pollution before he can partake of food or approach his god.

“ In some parts of the country the lowest castes are not even permitted to build within the towns, and their miserable hovels cluster amid heaps of broken potsherds and dunghills on the outskirts. And throughout the southern part of the continent it used to be a law, that no men of these degraded castes might enter the village before nine in the morning or after four in the evening, lest the slanting rays of the sun should cast his shadow across the path of a Brahmin. But at Puri, in the presence of the Lord of the World, priest and peasant are equal. The rice that has once been placed before the god can never cease to be pure, or lose its reflected sanctity. The lowest may demand it from, or give it to, the highest. Its sanctity overleaps all barriers, not only of caste, but of race and hostile faiths ; and a Puri priest will stand the test of receiving the food from a Christian's hand.” This is truly very wonderful in a country like India, where caste feelings are strong and bitter ; and thus Juggernaut may in a sense be called the Lord of the World, though he remains an idol all the same.

There is a legend, related in connection with the “ holy food ” and the “ equality of castes ” at Puri,

that is worth repeating. A certain young man, of high standing in society, it is said, puffed up with the shameful pride of caste, made a vow that he would visit Puri and see Juggernaut, but that he would eat no leavings of any mortal being. The proud young fellow drew near the sacred city, but when just about to pass within the gates he was stopped by the power of the Lord of the World and stricken with illness, so that his arms and legs fell off, and there remained of him only a miserable body which lay by the roadside. For two long months the crippled object was absolutely dependent on the charity of passers-by, but at length it chanced that a dog came that way with a mouthful of the "holy food" of Juggernaut, and let a few grains of rice fall on the ground.

The poor, humbled youth, noticing the food, managed to roll himself forward so that with his lips he might gather up the precious grain, the leavings of a dog, whose mere shadow falling on ordinary food would have defiled it. And, wondrous to relate, immediately the food had passed the young man's lips the mercy of Juggernaut was extended to him, and his health was restored, and he was suffered to enter Puri, and to approach in lowliest penitence the shrine of the Lord of the World. And ever after the youth was humble-minded and modest to a degree.

In writing of this doctrine of human brotherhood at the Temple of Puri, it is only fair to say, however, that at the present day it is in a great measure ignored by the priests, who keep out some people of the lowest castes. They have no right to do so, and thereby violate their own religious laws, but they are a

degenerate race of men and do not care. Generally speaking, admission to the temple is now refused to those who handle unclean substances, and to all who have to do with the destruction of animals, birds or fishes, and to Christians, Moslems, and the aboriginal tribes of India. Thus the one good thing about the Temple of Juggernaut—its theory of the universal brotherhood of mankind—is being gradually encroached upon, and made of none effect.

It has been already said that devotees come to worship the Lord of the World at Puri from all parts of India. While images of Juggernaut are to be found all over the country—and there is a very famous one at Scramptore, not far from Calcutta—the greatest merit is obtained, so it is believed, by seeing the original idol, or what passes for the original idol, in the Black Pagoda of Orissa. So thither the people journey day and night throughout every month of the year. There is, indeed, a constant pilgrimage of Hindus to Puri ; a vaster concourse of human beings than ever journeyed on pilgrimage to Jerusalem to the tomb of Christ, or to Mecca the birthplace of Mohammed. It is said that for three hundred miles along the great Orissa road, every village has its pilgrim encampment slowly making its way to Juggernaut.

The encampments consist of from twenty to four hundred persons, and at the time of the great festivals they tread so closely on each other's heels as almost to touch each other, and a continuous train of pilgrims many miles long may often be seen on the Puri high road. They march in orderly procession, each party

under its own leader. Often nine-tenths of them are women and children. Some of the pilgrims, in all probability, have come a thousand or even fourteen hundred miles, from the very farthest extremities of the empire. In these days of railways many of the travellers journey parts of the way by train, but some cover the whole distance on foot.

Sir William Hunter says : "Those who keep to the road have spent their strength long before the holy city is reached. The sturdy women of the north brave it out, and sing songs till they drop ; but the weaker females of Bengal limp piteously along with bleeding feet in silence, broken only by deep sighs and an occasional sob. The pilgrim-guide tries to keep up their spirits, and insist on their doing a full day's journey every day, in order that they may arrive in time for the festival.

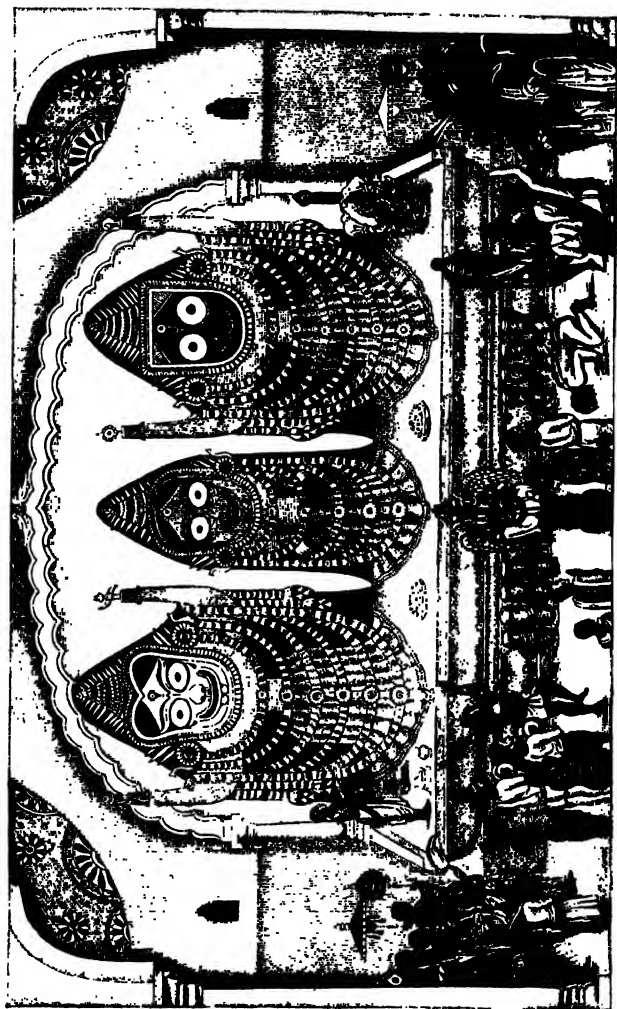
"Many a sickly girl dies upon the road ; and by the time they reach Puri, the whole party have their feet bound up in rags, plastered with dirt and blood. But once within sight of the holy city the pains and miseries of the journey are forgotten. They hurry across the ancient Mahratta bridge with songs and ejaculations, and rushing towards one of the great artificial lakes plunge beneath its sacred waters in a transport of religious emotion. The dirty bundles now yield their inner treasures of spotless cotton, and the pilgrims, refreshed and robed in clean garments, proceed to the temple."

The great object of the worshippers is to *see* Juggernaut, as it is declared that a sight of the idol will destroy sin in the observer, and bring him untold

bliss in eternity. Unfortunately, however, the sanctum in which the god is kept is so dark that scarcely anything is visible within, even at midday. The pilgrims usually enter the pagoda grounds by the east gate, and are then conducted round the outside of the building once, twice, and even seven times. Then they are shown into the Dancing Hall, through which they pass into the Audience Chamber. Now they are directed to look towards the Holy Sanctuary. Obeying the command with all eagerness, a cry of disappointment arises from their lips, for they are utterly unable to see a single object.

The fact is, the glare of the sun from the buildings they perambulated just before they entered the temple has for the moment dazed their vision. The priests, however, explain the matter by saying that the effect of sin renders carnal eyes unfit to behold the divine Juggernaut. Gradually as the people continue before the sanctum and get used to the darkness, a faint appearance of the idol is noticed. There is Juggernaut indeed, with his face painted black ; and there is his brother with a white face ; and there also is his sister with a golden-coloured complexion. At this sight the pilgrims raise a cry of rapture, and pass out of the temple with glad and joyous hearts, apparently amply repaid for their expense and sufferings by the road. Truly a very little satisfies the heart of the Hindu worshipper !

But what of those unfortunate creatures who, owing to the great throng at special festival times, cannot stand long enough in front of the holy sanctuary for their eyes to adjust themselves to the gloom ? This



IDOLS IN THE TEMPLE OF JUGGERNAUT.

happens in the case of countless thousands. These are, from their own point of view, unfortunate indeed, and depart with cries of despair; at which, however, the hard-hearted priests only laugh, and tell them to come another year, when perhaps their vision will be sufficiently cleansed from sin to behold the face of the Lord of the World. It must be terribly painful and humiliating to have to go back home, and confess that the journey was made almost altogether in vain, that, at any rate, though they had worshipped in Juggernaut's temple, the crowning mercy had not been granted of beholding the famous and precious idol—the god himself.

Some idea of the immense popularity of Juggernaut may be gained from the statement made by a Hindu gentleman who had spent his life at Puri, that the number that flocks in and out of the holy city never falls short of fifty thousand a year, and sometimes amounts to three hundred thousand. Some visitors say that even these high figures are below the mark, and that it would be nearer the truth to say that quite a million human beings every year worship the Lord of the World in his black pagoda on the shores of the Bay of Bengal.

The revenues of the famous temple are of course enormous. The Mohammedans in past days, when supreme rulers in India, are said to have raised a sum equivalent to £100,000 per annum, merely by putting a tax on pilgrims. The British Government continued the tax, but somehow only managed to raise a little over £6000 by the unholy traffic. In 1840 the English had the good sense and the courage to

give up entirely an income derived from idolatry ; and now all the taxes and fees which pilgrims pay are imposed and received by the raja of the district and the priests of the temple. It is believed one way and another the income at present will certainly be not less than £50,000 per annum. "The richer pilgrims heap gold and silver and jewels at the feet of the god, or spread before him charters and title-deeds conveying rich lands in distant provinces. Every one, from the richest to the poorest, gives beyond his ability ; many cripple their fortunes for the rest of their lives in a frenzy of liberality ; and hundreds die on the way home from not having kept enough to support them on the journey."

The number of priests of high and low degree in charge of the temple at Puri is estimated at nearly seven hundred, and then there are the musicians and the dancing-girls in constant attendance on the idol. From a return prepared for the House of Lords some years ago, the following interesting items of information have been gathered. There are about sixty officers to dress and ornament the idol, and three hundred watchmen day and night to provide for his safety. There are twenty keepers of the wardrobe, forty servants to ornament and perfume the image, three to paint the eyebrows of the god, and three more to see that the several general officers attend to their duties. Then further there are three hundred cooks to prepare rice and sweetmeats and the like, ten persons to supply water whenever required, and ten to look after the ceremonial vessels of the temple. A servant is provided also to keep watch at the closed

door of the holy sanctuary while the Lord of the World sleeps, and another to witness the opening of the door when the idol awakes. Thus the number of attendants is added up ; and it is said that at least six hundred and forty-one have definite duties assigned to them, which they must attend to every day on pain of the heavy displeasure of the god. However, to all who attend to their duties faithfully rich rewards are given in the substantial coins of the realm. .

The wealth of Juggernaut has often attracted the cupidity of thieves ; and I read a dreadful story a while back in the *Times of India* of a young Englishman, an officer in the Madras Army, in financial difficulties, who conceived the mad enterprise of robbing the Lord of the World of some jewels of fabulous worth, which are commonly reported to hang round the neck of the idol. Let the rest of the story be told in the words of the original narrator, a friend of the would-be thief, who was staying with him at the Traveller's Bungalow at Puri, but who had no idea of his companion's wicked resolve.

The narrator says : " When my friend went to bed, I took my pipe and sat smoking in the verandah. The moon was just rising, when I thought I saw the figure of a European stealing along the wall of the compound. Strange, I thought, and wondered what other European there could be here at the same time. An idea struck me, and I went across to my companion's room. There was nobody in it, the bed was undisturbed. I threw down my pipe and rushed out into the moonlight. A few seconds later I was in the road, and turned instinctively in the direction of the

town. Running down the road I soon came to a sandy lane, which went outside the village walls in the direction of the temples, their pinnacles standing out clear and distinct in the moonlight. In the distance I thought I saw the figure of my poor lad ; but soon the turnings and twistings of the lane, with its thick cactus hedges on each side, shut him out from my view.

“ In a few minutes I was close by the big temple compound. Running up to the wall I looked over, and this is what I saw. An enormous courtyard of paved stone, on which were lying a number of priests, their white garments wrapped round their heads and bodies ; in the background was placed temple upon temple, but in the very centre stood one solitary shrine, raised on three separate flights of steps, and inside I could see the great black god raised on three other smaller flights of coloured marble steps. The moonbeams shone directly on the god and lit up the emerald eyes and ruby lips, while the pearl necklace glowed on his huge black bosom.

“ Not a sound was to be heard, except some distant tomtoming at the further end of the town. The festival was over, and Puri had lapsed into solemn silence. To my unutterable horror I saw my companion walking right across the courtyard. Not a living creature moved, until a pariah dog rose up from near the wall, gave one howl, and then slunk away, and crouched down again. Still no one stirred. My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. I dared not shout even if I could have raised my voice. A ghastly horror took hold of me, as the idea struck me that

in his madness my poor friend intended to save his honour by the greater dishonour of robbing the idol.

“Speechless I saw him mount step after step, and the next moment I saw him enter the sacred shrine, across the threshold of which no other foot but that of the Brahmin has ever passed. Nine steps led up to the god—one, two, three, four, five, six. He paused; I tried to shout, but no sound would come. He raised his hand as if to tear off the pearl necklace. It was still above his reach; his foot then touched the seventh. Oh! can I ever forget the sight? In the moonlight flashed out two arms covered with one hundred—nay, two hundred—daggers, and clasped the daring youth to the black god’s breast. *At the same moment the sound of a gong broke the stillness of the night, and in one moment the priests had cast off their coverings, and were rushing to the shrine. Two minutes later, I saw the amazed and horrified priests carrying out the lifeless body of the dishonoured Englishman, and I turned and fled.”

We may indulge the charitable hope that this horrible and improbable story is an invention, yet its truth is vouched for by the correspondent who contributed it to the *Times of India*, who says, “To this day, by the pilgrim camp-fires of Orissa, is told with bated breath, and listened to with rapt attention, the terrible tale of the Jewels of Juggernaut, and of the vengeance of the great god.”

There are three famous festivals in connection with the worship of Juggernaut, of which mention ought to be made. The first is called the *Bathing Festival*, which occurs in June or July, when the god is taken

from his place in the holy sanctuary, and brought into full public view, and bathed by the priests in the presence of tens of thousands of spectators, who at a given signal unite in one loud thunder-cry of "Victory ! victory to Juggernaut !" The god then retires to the privacy of his own room. Next, a fortnight later, comes the *Car Festival*, when the Lord of the World, who is supposed to have caught a cold from his bath, is taken out for a change of air, for the good of his health. His brother and sister, from tender solicitude for his welfare, insist on accompanying him.

Witness, then, the three ugly idols placed on three mighty cars, ready to start for their drive. Juggernaut's conveyance stands forty-one feet high, and has fourteen enormous wheels; while the upper parts of it are covered with green, blue, red, and yellow, and other coloured cloths, hung in strips fantastically arranged, and adorned with various devices. The tower of the car is surmounted by a globe and a flag, conveying to all whom it may concern that Juggernaut, the Lord of the World, is there in royal state.

And now comes the most exciting part of the proceedings. The great cars have to be dragged a certain distance—half a mile or more—from the temple ; and the god will not allow horses or elephants to undertake this work, but calls upon his faithful worshippers to do it themselves. Immense ropes, or rather cables, are manufactured and attached to the cars, and at the word of command from the priests thousands of men, and even women and children, rush forward and seize the ropes, and range themselves in order, and



CAR OF JUGGERNAUT AT PURI, ORISSA.

the next moment are straining and pulling at the cumbersome conveyances, which at length move with a heavy, creaking noise.

On one occasion, at a village near Serampore, I witnessed this extraordinary spectacle of the dragging of Juggernaut's car, and the cars of his brother and sister. Never shall I forget the sight. The road was filled with tens of thousands of lookers-on, all wild with excitement; and the poor fanatics who held the ropes were dragging the cars along with frenzied zeal. Every now and then there would be a stop, that the men might rest, I supposed; but instead of resting they took to jumping in the air, and to whirling themselves round like dancing dervishes, and shouting at the top of their breath, "Victory! victory to Juggernaut!" At length the vehicles reached their destination. All of a sudden a noise of firearms was heard—a signal from the priests—and in a moment the great ropes were thrown down, and the cars stopped in the middle of the road. Then once more the dense throng of worshippers raised a mighty cry of victory to the Lord of the World, that could be heard miles away.

In connection with the car festival there is associated, in European minds, sad tales of infatuated human beings who have thrown themselves under the wheels of Juggernaut's conveyance, and have been crushed to death. Such deeds have certainly happened, but they have not been anything like so frequent as many people have supposed; and they are not in harmony with the teaching of the priests with respect to Juggernaut, who is described as a merciful god,

desiring the good of men, and wishing harm to befall no one. Self-immolation is altogether opposed to the will of the idol, so the Hindus say ; and yet it remains a fact that some worshippers have deliberately sacrificed their lives under the wheels of Juggernaut's car. This is accounted for, and probably correctly, by the statement that such suicides are for the most part cases of diseased and miserable people, utterly tired of life, and who falsely imagined that the Lord of the World would be pleased with their violent death.

In July 1826, the Rev. Mr. Lacey, a missionary in Orissa, witnessed a sad case of self-immolation in connection with the Car Festival, of which he thus wrote : " This afternoon I had an awful subject for my discourse—the body of a poor man crushed to pieces by the car of Juggernaut. The massy wheel had passed over his loins, and he presented a shocking sight to look upon. While standing by the dead body, I became quite ill with sickness, and every limb shivered with horror. The wheels of the car are made for this work of death most effectually, as the spokes project three or four inches beyond the felloe. The poor wretch had thrown himself from the front of the car, and so was a voluntary sacrifice. He seemed a respectable man, apparently a Brahmin. I felt I ought not to lose such an opportunity of witnessing against a system that produced such effects ; so I took my stand over the body, and spoke with some feeling of the nature of the Hindu religion, and compared it with Christianity ; and perhaps I never had a more serious congregation. Some hardened wretches standing by said, ' See, sir, the

glory of Juggernaut,' pointing to the mangled body. I concluded by rebuking them, and recommending them to look to Jesus Christ for mercy and salvation, which Juggernaut could never give."

At the present time such deeds are almost unknown, but then the British Government takes great precautions against either accidents or suicides at the famous Car Festival. I remember when I witnessed the ceremony near Serampore, that more than one European policeman was near the car on the watch, and that numbers of native police were on both sides holding long ladders, with which they kept the people away from the ponderous wheels while the car was in motion. It is doubtless due to such forethought and care on the part of a parental government, more than to a very decided change of public feeling on the matter, that we owe the present immunity from horrible deaths under the wheels of the car of the Lord of the World.

Juggernaut and his brother and sister extend their visit to the country for a fortnight, and during that time they remain by the roadside the observed of all observers. Pilgrims who failed to see the renowned god when they visited him in his temple, may now, if they have stayed for the car festival, have a splendid opportunity of making up their loss. It was really pitiful to see with what eagerness the Hindus rushed forward to get a near view of Juggernaut, that day I was present at the festival. Directly the car stopped and the ropes were thrown down there was a scramble for first places.

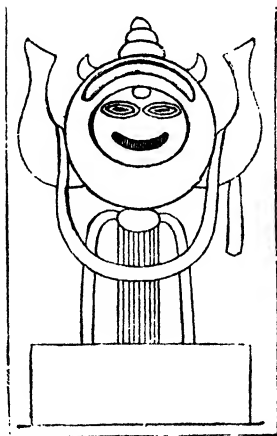
The men, however, were soon satisfied, and after

gazing a moment and giving donations to the priests of money and fruits, they quickly withdrew and went their way. The women lingered longer, and seemed to be more truly in earnest in their worship, and more deeply impressed by the vision of the god. And young people and even children too were there. It was pathetic to see mothers with little ones in their arms pointing the babies solemnly to Juggernaut, and teaching children a little older, whom they led by the hand, to bend their heads reverently until their foreheads touched the car. I watched many such parties come and go, and in every case the parents and children departed with beaming faces, evidently convinced that their devotions had been accepted by the great deity whom they had been privileged to see in all the glory of his holiday paint and apparel.

But I must close this chapter, which has extended to a greater length than I at first intended, by stating that after fourteen days *The Festival of the Return* takes place; and Juggernaut and his brother and sister are dragged back to Puri, and the idols are reseated on their thrones in the holy sanctuary of the black pagoda. And there they remain the great centre of attraction for millions of human beings. "The sad sea waves" are heard within the courts of the temple of Juggernaut, though not it is said in the inner chamber where the Lord of the World dwells. But sadder still are the sounds of woe that come from every corner of India after the great festivals are over, for of the thousands upon thousands of pilgrims who journey from far to see Juggernaut, thousands never see again their distant homes, or the

faces of loved friends. In innumerable households sorrowful relatives are mourning the loss of fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers or children, who have perished either from the privations of the journey, or from the epidemics of cholera and other diseases which break out every year during the special seasons of pilgrimage.

Truly Juggernaut, the Lord of the World, brings sorrow rather than joy to his worshippers ; and it will be a glad day for the East when India's sons and daughters turn from their favourite idol with disdain, and look upon the dear face of Jesus, the compassionate Lord, the true Brother of mankind, the only Saviour of the human race from sin and sorrow and death.



EMBLEM OF DHARMA, TEMPLE OF
JUGGERNAUT.



SACRED MONKEYS OF THE HINDOOS.

VII.

SACRED MONKEYS.

ALL monkeys are sacred in the eyes of a devout Hindu ; so that my young readers must understand, when I speak about sacred monkeys, I am not speaking of some monkeys in particular, but of monkeys in general. But how comes it, some may ask, that the Hindu regards all monkeys as sacred ? To understand this we must take our thoughts back

many ages, and dive into the literature of the Hindus. In the sacred book called *Ramayana*, which gives an account of the wonderful adventures of the god Rama, we read that Sita, his wife, was captured by a demon-king, Ravana by name, and carried off a prisoner to Ceylon, where she was detained.

Rama, distressed on account of the loss of his beautiful Sita, planned an expedition to Ceylon to rescue her from the demon. Not feeling equal to the enterprise alone, he made friends with a powerful tribe of aborigines, scornfully called monkeys, in the south of India, and enlisted their services, which seem to have been readily given. The king of the monkeys was called Sugriva, but the real hero of the tribe was one Hanuman, who occupied the post of prime minister. Of Hanuman let me give a few particulars.

Hanuman was the son of Vāyu, the god of wind, and Vānar, a female monkey. Of his childhood many wonderful stories are told. It is said that on one occasion, seeing the sun rising, he thought it to be the fruit of a tree, and being anxious to have a taste of what promised from appearances to be rather a delicious morsel, he sprang up three hundred leagues to clutch it. We may be sure he fell back to the earth again a little wiser. On another occasion, for some boyish indiscretion, the god Indra let a thunderbolt fly at him, which caused him to fall violently on a rock. The fall shattered his cheek, and hence the name Hanuman, the "long-jawed one," was given to him.

When ten years of age this monkey-god is said to have lifted a stone of fabulous size, and to have played a curious prank with it on a number of fakirs or holy

men, whom he found worshipping by the waters of a sacred tank. When the saints had closed their eyes in devotion, Hanuman dropped the immense stone into the tank ; and, lo ! the worshippers were surrounded by water, and had to swim a great distance before they could reach dry land. At the water's edge they again closed their eyes and resumed their prayers. At that moment, however, the monkey-god took out the gigantic stone, and the waters retired, so that when the holy men opened their eyes they found they were quite a distance from the tank. Thus they were tricked again and again, until they found out that Hanuman was the source of all their annoyance, when they punished him by taking from him, so the story says, half his strength.

The mischievous monkey even now, however, was stronger than the strongest human being, if we may judge by an anecdote which relates that he one day spread out his long tail right across a road along which a giant named Bheema was walking. When the giant reached the tail, he stopped, and asked the monkey courteously to remove it, for a Hindu will not stride across a person's body, or even the shadow of any one. Hanuman laughed, and told him to remove it himself. At last Bheema stooped to do so, thinking he had an easy task to perform. To his intense astonishment, however, he found that the tail was heavier than the heaviest iron, and that even when he put forth his whole strength to lift it, he could not move it a single inch. Overcome with his exertions, he acknowledged the superior powers of the monkey, and swore eternal friendship with him.

Such was the ally Rama sought to help him in war against the King of Ceylon. And so well did Hanuman conduct himself in that famous enterprise, and such was the renown he gained by his daring exploits and remarkable feats of strength, that Rama and his people looked upon the monkey-general as an incarnation of a deity, and rendered him divine honours. And ever since that time the people of India have regarded Hanuman as the prince of monkeys, as the monkey-god, and have worshipped his image in their temples.

I remember when in Allahabad seeing an immense idol-monkey which was meant to represent Hanuman. The monster image was kept in a dry tank, flat on its back, and there was a covering to keep off the rays of the sun. This idol, the priests in charge said, was made of stone, but it looked as if made of some kind of composition. Anyway, it was painted a brilliant red from head to foot. I went down to the lowest step to view the image. It was covered except the head with a sheet, and on this covering there were coins here and there, evidently the offerings of worshippers. The cloth was removed so that I might have a good view. Truly the monkey-god was a frightful-looking fellow, and the sight of him gave me the most vivid idea I ever received of the hideousness of idol-worship.

The priests, in answer to the question, "When was this idol made?" remarked that it was self-created, and appeared a number of years ago in the twinkling of an eye in the very place in which I saw it. I imagined as I turned to go away that I detected a

twinkle in the eye of one of the speakers, grave Brahmin though he appeared to be. The priests evidently thought that I was ready to believe any tale they saw fit to palm upon me.

Passing from image-monkeys to living monkeys, it has to be said that the Hindus regard them with equal or greater reverence. As the representatives in the flesh of their great forefather Hanuman, all monkeys are now considered holy. It is deemed by the Hindus a very dreadful thing to injure or even attempt to injure a monkey, for by doing so you would be casting an indignity upon the god Hanuman, who would be sure to resent and punish it.

It is a matter of history that two Englishmen lost their lives in Muttra, the sacred city of Krishna, where monkeys abound, through striking a sacred animal. The gentlemen were walking through the streets of the town, and being pestered by some monkeys that followed them, they turned and struck one of them rather a severe blow on the head. In a moment there was a commotion in the streets, for the people who had witnessed the sacrilegious act were wild with indignation and rushed at the delinquents. The two unfortunate Europeans, thoroughly alive then to the mistake they had made, defended themselves as best they could; but it was in vain they fought against the thousands of infuriated priests and pilgrims who surrounded them. In a few minutes the struggle was over. The Englishmen paid with their lives for their error.

Even the Hindus themselves dare not publicly strike a monkey, no matter what mischief the animal may

be doing. The Rev. J. Ewan, of Benares, in his book entitled "*Sketches and Stories of Native Life*," tells a tale which illustrates this point. He visited Muttra on one occasion, and saw the spot where the Englishmen had been done to death. He just mentions the incident, and then says: "Near the place where the tragedy happened I witnessed a sight I shall never forget—a fight between a large male monkey and a portly Brahmin! It was about the possession of a brass goblet. The Brahmin had set it down with something in it, and as soon as he turned his back the monkey came down, put his hand in, grasped part of the contents, and of course could not get his fist out.

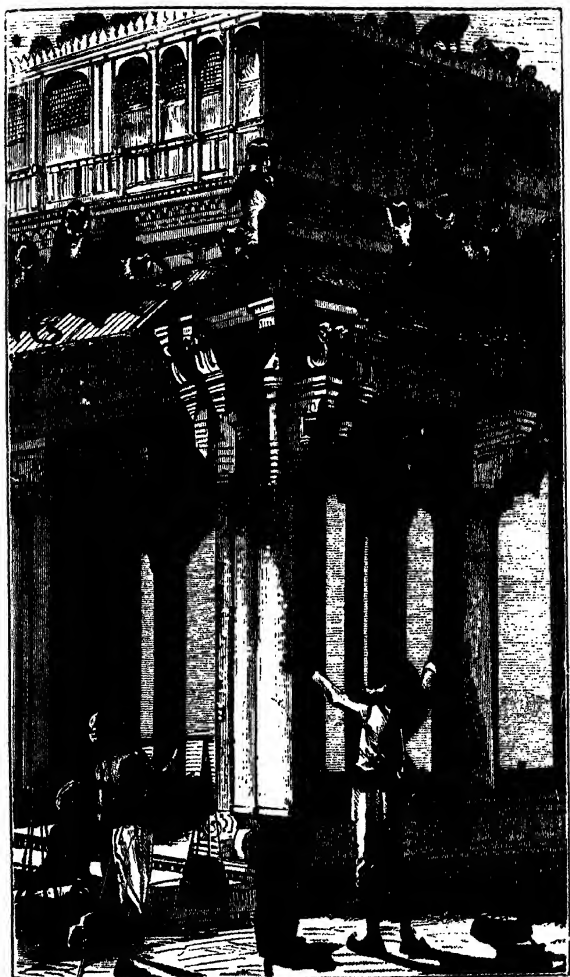
"The Brahmin returned, and at first tried endearing expressions to get it to give up the vessel, but to no purpose. Then he tried something a little stronger, and emphasised it with the exhibition of a loaded cane. To this the monkey replied by threatening him with its teeth and armed fist. As I passed, the Brahmin stood with his stick at the 'present,' and the monkey with his brass goblet high over head as if it would pitch it the instant he dared move. Yet the Brahmin who could be abusive to men, who could rob the poor pilgrims of their all, would not venture to touch the hateful brute." Thus the monkey won in the contest.

Mr. Ewan tells another good story of the monkeys of Muttra. He writes, "We had a school in this town some years ago, at a place near which the monkeys used to congregate in very large numbers. One morning I was examining the pupils, but found it difficult to keep their attention. Something seemed

to be amusing them. It was evidently over my head ; but as I had kept my sun hat on to protect me from the heat, I could not see what it was. Their amusement went on increasing, till I could no longer resist the temptation to follow the direction of their gaze. Looking up I saw a monkey stretched out on the trellis roof like a man over a grating, its arm stretched out to the full, in a frantic effort to seize my hat. When I looked up and stopped the fun, it grinned and chattered at me as if I had been its greatest enemy."

Monkeys are said to be very affectionate towards each other as a rule, and are generally found to gather in large numbers. In times of scarcity of food the strong will exercise mastery over the weak, but in a general way they are peaceably and lovingly inclined to one another. The attachment of the mother-monkey towards her offspring is remarkable, and has become proverbial in India. When a young monkey has died the mother has been observed to keep it closely encircled in her arms, moaning piteously the while, and only parting with the dead body at the urgent supplication of companions. And even when the little one has been carried away and thrown into a waste place, the mother has followed, and has lain down on the ground at no great distance and watched with intense anxiety for hours to see if there was any sign of returning life. So we perceive that even troublesome monkeys have their good points.

It is regarded as a very meritorious act to feed a monkey ; and here and there in India, troops of these sacred animals are to be found in temples, where the priests see to their comfort. Perhaps the most famous



VIEW OF THE MONKEY TEMPLE.

of these temples is the one at Benares called the Durga Kund, but more commonly "the Monkey-Temple." When I visited the spot there were thousands of the monkeys to be seen, of all ages, sizes, tempers, and peculiarities. At a signal from one of the priests a troop of the agile, mischievous creatures surrounded us, and I began to fear somewhat for our safety. However, the animals behaved themselves well, apart from a little teasing, and were rewarded with handfuls of grain.

Many visitors were there besides myself, but they were Hindus, and I was pained to see that they actually worshipped the chattering, comical creatures as living gods and goddesses. Saturday is the great day for worshipping monkeys. Birthdays are also considered propitious occasions, and the boon then asked for is length of days. Hanuman is considered immortal, and it is believed that he will add to the years of those who are devout in the worship of his living representatives upon earth.

There is a story told in Benares of a gentleman who brought a pet monkey of a rare species from the Himalayas to the plains. Such a beautiful specimen of the monkey tribe had never been seen in the sacred city, and he was the seven days' wonder of the inhabitants. At length a deputation of priests from the monkey-temple waited on the fortunate owner, craving permission to conduct the pet to the temple with all honour, as it was incumbent on them to worship it. So the monkey had a holiday granted to him, and he was carried off in triumph by the priests and a concourse of people to the sacred shrine, where

he was duly worshipped with choice offerings, and the next day was restored to his master with many thanks for the loan. Of late the number of the monkeys has so increased in Benares that they are felt to be a public nuisance. "What to do with our monkeys?" is the burning question of the day in the sacred city of the Hindus. There has been talk of exporting them, but two difficulties lie in the way—the refusal of the railway company to carry them, and the want of place to receive them.

While in India, when I was visiting in the neighbourhood of Mirzapore, I made a journey of some miles to a temple to see a family gathering of monkeys about whom I had been told an amusing tale. In the neighbourhood of the temple, almost whenever you go, you will see a priest sitting on the ground with his legs crossed under him. There he sits very solemnly reading something, probably one of the sacred volumes in his possession, and ever now and then he will take off his spectacles and replace them with great care.

On one occasion the monkeys, who had formed a circle round this venerable man, and were watching his proceedings with uncommon interest, made up their minds to clear up the mystery of the spectacles. So when the priest took off his glasses for the fourth time and held them at arm's length, one of the most daring of the little company clutched them out of his hand, and placed them deliberately across his own nose. The result seemed to please him immensely if his grimaces and antics and cries meant anything. Probably his eyesight was failing him, and he found

out that the spectacles just suited his impaired vision. But the fun did not end there. The priest, when he recovered somewhat from his surprise, saw his spectacles going the round of the delighted company of monkeys, some of whom they fitted and suited, and some of whom they did not fit or suit. And to make the whole affair still more enjoyable, the spectacles were coolly handed back to the patient priest when curiosity had been completely satisfied ; and, strange to say, they were no worse for the handling they had received and the examination they had undergone.

Monkeys and dogs seem to have a strong antipathy to each other, and it is impossible for them to meet without quarrelling. Miss Cumming tells about a magnificent hill dog that was presented to her, called Ramnee, who was as gentle as a lamb with human beings, but a perfect tartar with monkeys. She writes : "This antipathy to the monkey-tribe came near to causing me trouble on our return to the plains, for as we neared the Nerbudda river, he suddenly espied a great encampment of devotees accompanied by a regiment of monkeys. He was sitting beside me in an open dak-gharry, and ere I could possibly check him he sprang out and made for them. In an instant the whole camp was routed, and men and monkeys put to flight. The general confusion was diverting, but I was heartily glad when, tardily obeying my call, the great, big, gentle puppy returned, like a gentleman, to his seat in the carriage.

"Then the obnoxious-looking company plucked up courage to approach and claim backsheesh for their

insulted monkeys, when happily it occurred to me to turn the tables and claim backsheesh for my beautiful dog, who was sitting gravely at my side. Whether they were dumfounded by the exquisite absurdity of the demand, or simply considered that a white woman who would sit beside a dog was altogether impracticable, I cannot say, but they laughed and departed. That was poor Ramnee's last scamper in India."

A friend of mine, the Rev. W. G. Wilkins, late of Calcutta, had an encounter on one occasion with monkeys when he had a little dog with him. He relates the adventure in his interesting book, "*Daily Life and Work in India*." He writes: "I once received rather too much attention from a number of these four-handed animals. Having with me a little dog that evidently had not been often in the presence of monkeys, and who expressed his surprise at their appearance in a manner that irritated them, about twenty of them made an attack upon the little terrier. I knew that if once they caught him he would be carried to a tree and there torn to pieces; and as I had nothing but an umbrella to defend myself with, the odds were rather against me for a time. I confess I was rather annoyed to see the villagers standing as mere spectators of the game, evidently wishing to see fair play, for not one of them raised a finger to help me. With my open umbrella I managed to shelter the dog, whilst I marched backwards as quickly as possible, until I was near enough to call to my companions for help. I have no wish for another encounter with monkeys."

I have heard of another terrier named Fury, belonging to Lady Barker, which had no gallant defender in the hour of need, and which consequently came to an untimely end through its hatred of monkeys. Simla, the pleasant hill-station of the Imperial Government, was the scene of the catastrophe. Miss Cumming tells the story. In Simla there is a hill named Jakko, the woods on which are infested with monkeys, both the common brown ones, and the great big grey ones with black face and paws, and fringe of white hair round the forehead.

From Jakko it appears the monkeys were in the habit of wandering to the different houses in the neighbourhood intent on "picking and stealing," and in the course of their wanderings they often came across the little terrier, which never lost a chance of barking at them and frightening them off the premises. The disappointed monkeys bore the matter in mind, and bided their time for a terrible revenge. One day, as little Fury was accompanying his mistress through a dark thicket of rhododendrons, she saw the skinny arm of a monkey suddenly dart out from amid the scarlet blossoms, and quick as thought the poor terrier was seized by his long, silky hair, and in a second had disappeared in the thicket. Vain were all attempts at rescue; vainly and piteously the doggie yelped and howled, while a shaking of the branches and sound of scuffling were all that betrayed his unwilling ascent to the top of a high tree, where a monkey-jury had assembled to try the criminal. Once there his unhappy mistress beheld her little favourite passed from one to another, that each in turn might have

the satisfaction of pinching, and tweaking, and pulling out his hair till his particular grudge was revenged. Then, when all were tired of this amusement, they took him to the extreme end of a branch, and dropped him down a precipice. And so ended poor Fury's quarrel with the monkeys!

Lady Barker had another troublesome experience with the monkeys on the occasion of the first dinner-party she gave in Simla. "Being anxious to have an unusually pretty table, she had herself expended much care and trouble in its adornment *à la Russe*; and having just received from Europe certain dainty china figures and ornamental dishes, she had arranged such a show of sweetmeats, flowers, and fruit as should have filled all beholders with admiration. When dressing-time came, she charged her servants on no account to leave the room till her return; but hardly was her back turned, when the temptation of hubble-bubble prevailed, and they slipped out for a quiet smoke, quite forgetting the open window, and the great tree just outside, where sat certain watchful monkeys vastly interested in the proceedings.

"Judge of the feelings of the hostess when, coming down to receive her guests, she just looked into the dining-room to make sure that her work was perfect, and there found a busy company of monkeys hard at work, grinning and jabbering, their cheeks and arms crammed with expensive sweetmeats, while the table presented a scene of frightful devastation—broken glass and china, fair linen soiled—everything tossed about in hopeless confusion! From this wreck she had to turn aside, and try to look pleasant and quite

at ease while entertaining the hungry guests, who had to wait patiently till something like order could be restored, and a dinner served shorn of all frivolous adornments."

The temerity and audacity of monkeys is really something wonderful. Monsieur Henri Mouhot, the lamented French naturalist who fell a victim to fever in the wilds of Indo-China, relates a remarkable story in the first volume of his "Travels," of monkeys daring even to tease that dangerous creature the crocodile. The writer says: "Close to the bank lies the crocodile, his body in the water, and only his capacious mouth above the surface, ready to seize anything that may come within reach. A troop of apes catch sight of him, seem to consult together, approach little by little, and commence their frolics, by turns actors and spectators. One of the most active or most impudent jumps from branch to branch till within a respectful distance of the crocodile, when hanging by one claw, and with the dexterity peculiar to these animals, he advances and retires, now giving his enemy a blow with his paw, at another time only pretending to do so. The other apes, enjoying the fun, evidently wish to take part in it; but the other branches being too high, they form a sort of chain by laying hold of each other's paws, and thus swing backwards and forwards, while any one of them who comes within reach of the crocodile torments him to the best of his ability. Sometimes the terrible jaws suddenly close, but not upon the audacious ape, who just escapes; then there are cries of exultation from the tormentors, who gambol about joyfully. Occasionally, however, the claw is

entrapped, and the victim dragged with the rapidity of lightning beneath the water, when the whole troop disperse, groaning and shrieking. The misadventure does not, however, prevent their recommencing the game a few days afterwards."

In the "Statesman and Friend of India," a still more remarkable anecdote appeared some time back of an adventure a monkey had with a tiger. It appears that the village of Mahabpore, in the district of Rajshahji, was greatly troubled by a man-eating tiger, which had taken up its quarters in a jungle hard by. The inhabitants did their best to destroy or drive away the brute, but without avail. At last a monkey came to the rescue. The tale runs that when the tiger was lying down in a shady place, a monkey, espying it, took it into its head to poke the savage animal with a stick; and seemed to relish the joke very much. And whenever the tiger tried to attack its malicious assailant the latter sprang up a tree out of the way.

Thus the fun went on at intervals for a few days, when the monkey thought a ride would be a pleasant variety, and in a moment placed itself on the back of the tiger and seized its ears with its fore paws, while it twisted its hind paws under its body. The insulted and enraged animal needed neither spur nor whip, but at once began to race across the country with terrific leaps and bounds, the monkey holding on bravely all the time. In sheer disgust and despair the tiger at last dashed towards the village as if to supplicate the inhabitants to rid it of its tormentor. The people of course refused to interfere; and so the distressed animal sought again the seclusion of the jungle, and

there, when it was thoroughly knocked up, the monkey took advantage of an overhanging branch, and immediately climbed to the top of a tree. The next day the tiger left the district, and was at last killed in a neighbouring village. Thus did a monkey do a good turn to human beings.

There is a famous village in Bengal called Gooptee-parah, which is noted for its pundits, or learned men, and its monkeys. This curious double notoriety has led to much satire, and it is now a common saying in India to ask whether a man comes from Gooptee-parah, when the speaker means to insinuate that he is nothing better than a monkey. It was from this celebrated village that Raja Krishna Chunder Roy procured some monkeys, which he took to Krishnugger, and there caused to be married, with all the usual formalities, as if they had been human beings. The expenses of the nuptials came to a small fortune.

Some years ago the Raja of Nuddea did the same mad trick. He is said to have spent one hundred thousand rupees in marrying two monkeys. In the procession were seen elephants, camels, horses richly caparisoned, palanquins, lamps and torches. The male monkey was fastened in a fine carriage, having a crown upon his head, with men by his side to fan him. Then followed musicians and dancing-girls in carriages, and a great concourse of people. For twelve days the rejoicings were continued in the palace and in the town. All Nuddea seemed to have gone crazy over the extraordinary event. At the close of the ceremonies the bride and bridegroom were given their liberty, but they remained in the neighbourhood, and

their descendants are there to this day. Indeed, Nuddea is now overrun with the troublesome creatures.

Nothing more, I am sure, is needed to show the utter folly of the Hindus with regard to the so-called Sacred Monkeys of the East. An intellectual race has fallen low indeed when it can worship such a silly, comical, and mischievous animal as a monkey !





THE KRISHNA AVATARA. (FROM A NATIVE PICTURE.)

VIII.

THE STORY OF KRISHNA.

KRISHNA, or to give him his full name, Shree Krishnu Chund, is one of the most popular of the gods of India, and is the special favourite of the women and children of India. The story of the life of this god is most curious and interesting, and reminds us in some respects of the life of our Lord

Jesus Christ. The very name Krishna, as pronounced in the East, suggests to us the name of our Saviour. But my young readers will see, as they peruse this chapter, that Krishna was a poor character when placed in contrast with Christ; for while our Lord appealed to the nobler side of human nature, Krishna appealed to the baser.

A Zenana Missionary in Calcutta, in a report of her work, once said: "There is a strong belief among Hindu women that our Christ and their Krishna are one and the same person. This opinion, while it is perhaps the means of gaining us a hearing, is to my mind one of the greatest stumbling-blocks, for it is extremely difficult for them to see or acknowledge the difference between Christ's character and that of Krishna: that the one was pure, self-denying, and loving; the other licentious, self-pleasing, and loving only in a lower and bad sense."

But now to give some details of the life of this popular god. Krishna, it is said, was born at Muttra, a city in the neighbourhood of Agra in Northern India. He is represented to have been an incarnation of Vishnu, the second person of the Hindu Trinity—not a complete incarnation, but "a portion of a portion" of the divine essence of Vishnu, the preserver of all created things. The first appearance of Krishna in this world is fabled to have been on this wise: At midnight on a Wednesday he was born, and appeared at once before his father and mother "the colour of a cloud, with a face like the moon, and with eyes like a water-lily." He had on his head a crown of gold, and round his neck was hung a necklace

composed of jewels, and--would you believe it?—round his body there was a yellow vest.

What a curious little fellow this new-born babe would look, being unlike, I am sure, any baby that you or I have yet been privileged to see. This wonderful appearance of the boy was all illusory, however, for, as the story tells us, no sooner had his parents shouted out at the sight of him, "Great is our good fortune," than he became like other children, and began to cry in a hearty and vigorous fashion. Just as we are told in the Bible that Herod sought to destroy the child Jesus, so the Hindus in their sacred scriptures say that a wicked king or demon, called Kansa, sought to slay the babe Krishna. But Prince Basodeo, the father of Krishna, fled by night with the child to carry him to a place of safety.

The story relates how that Krishna was placed in a basket and carried out into the darkness on his father's head. The night was wild, the rain came down in torrents, the winds blew a hurricane, and the beasts of the field roared with terror; but the new-born babe was as happy as possible, and crowed with delight. At length the river Jumna, which flows by Muttra, was reached, and the anxious and distressed father paused in dismay, for there seemed no possible way of crossing the swollen stream. Plunging in, however, he resolved to essay the task; but the depth of the river increased as he advanced, and soon the water reached his mouth. It seemed as if father and child must perish, but in a most unexpected way deliverance was wrought. The babe in the basket, the Hindus say, worked a miracle. Seeing the danger,

he stretched out a chubby little foot and touched the water; when lo, the river became shallow, and the other side was speedily reached in safety!

Through the raging storm Basoodeo pressed on with his precious burden until he reached the village of Gokool, where he found for the babe a home in the



KRISHNA.

house of a poor shepherd called Nund, whose little daughter, born the same evening, was taken away in exchange. Thus Krishna was delivered from the power of the wicked king. What became of the prince and princess, the father and mother of Krishna, we are not told—they drop out of the story altogether; and Krishna, for some years at any rate, was led to

think that his foster-parents Nund and Jasodha, the poor peasants, were his real parents. With these lowly but kind-hearted people, who treated him with much affection, the child henceforward passed his days.

And very happy the days of Krishna's childhood and youth seem to have been. He had a foster-brother named Bulram, who loved him dearly, and was his inseparable companion as they both grew in years. The two boys are represented as being of a very merry and somewhat mischievous disposition. One favourite pastime of these youngsters was to lay hold of cows' tails and hang on, while the animals ran hither and thither, evidently enjoying the fun as much as their little masters. But while we may smile at such escapades of youth, we have quite different feelings when we are told in the Hindu writings that Krishna developed into a very clever thief. Is it not strange that any people can worship a thief? But the Hindus, I am afraid, think that it does not matter what their gods do. Divinity seems to be regarded as an excuse for any wickedness. Though Krishna is generally acknowledged to have been an immoral character, yet he is almost universally adored and loved in India.

And, not content with being a thief himself, we are told that Krishna sought to train his companion Bulram and his other playmates in the same craft. There is a story told about his taking a number of cowherds' children to a place called Bruj, and encouraging them to steal butter. They searched for this tempting article of diet in houses which were left for a few

hours by their owners, and stole all they found. They also carried away the milk pails belonging to people they found asleep in their houses.

One day, however, Krishna was caught in the very act of thieving, and taken before his foster-mother, who, instead of scolding him, or punishing him, or pointing out to him the sinfulness of his conduct, simply said, "Son, do not go to any one's house; whatever you wish to eat, eat at home." Upon this, Krishna told a lie to cover his theft. Let me quote the very words of the Hindu book from which I have learned these things. Creeping up to his foster-mother, the boy said in whining tones, "Do not, mother, place any reliance on what they say. These false shepherdesses have spoken falsely, and have come roaring in pursuit of me. Sometimes they make me lay hold of milk-pails and calves; sometimes they make me perform the drudgery of their houses, and having placed me at the door to watch, they go about their business, and then come and tell you stories." Thus the youth very meanly excused himself.

Even in his own house Krishna gave trouble at times, for he was far from being an obedient boy. Take one story as an example. It was a special churning day, and Jasodha was very busy. But right in the middle of her churning, Krishna, who had been asleep, must needs awake, and call out crossly for something to eat. "Mother! mother!" he shouted, "how often have I to call you, and you will not attend to me?" Not satisfied with the promise that he would receive something to eat directly, the peevish boy

grumbled and threatened mischief. Before his foster-mother was aware of his purpose, he had seized the churn-staff from a large dish, and putting both his hands in had taken out the butter, and began throwing it about, and besmearing his body with it. Thereupon Jasodha, hoping to pacify him, stopped her work and said, "Come along with me, and I will give you food, you naughty boy!" But the perverse young man was not to be so easily quieted down, for he answered, "I will not take it now: why did you not give it me at first?" At length with coaxing and kissing he was prevailed upon to eat, and the wearied woman went back to her churning.

Jasodha had scarcely resumed her occupation, however, when Master Krishna threw over and smashed some pottery, and ran into the yard with a dish of butter in his hand to divide amongst his companions. Captured and led back to the house, the naughty lad was told that he must submit to being tied to the wooden mortar, so that he might be kept out of mischief. He agreed; but every spring with which his foster-mother sought to secure him proved on trial to be too short, for, according to the story, the young prince by his supernatural powers shortened them. At length, however, perceiving that Jasodha was on the point of bursting into tears, the exasperating youth opposed no longer, and suffered himself to be tied up, and was on his best behaviour for the rest of the day.

When Krishna was a little older, he was permitted by his foster-parents to go out with other boys to graze the cattle at some distance from home. On one

such expedition, a curious and comical event is reported to have happened. The tale goes that while Krishna was tending the cattle out in the open fields, his old enemy, Kansa, sent a demon in the form of a big crane to gobble the lad up. Krishna, it appears, knew well enough what the crane was after ; and when he saw it approaching he assumed an attitude of indifference, and without a struggle allowed himself to be seized by the enormous bill, and swallowed wholesale.

From the inside of the crane, Krishna gathered from the loud screams he heard that his companions were terribly upset with what had happened. "Alas, alas !" they cried ; "let us go and tell his mother !" Ere they could start, however, the young prince or god carried out a little scheme he had been revolving in his mind. All of a sudden he made himself hot, and he grew hotter and hotter, until the crane became uncomfortable ; and then he grew hotter still until the bird could bear it no longer, and ejected him from its mouth. Once again at liberty Krishna turned on the disguised demon, and seizing the beak of the crane, pressed the bird under his feet, and tore it to pieces, thus inflicting death on his enemy. Collecting the calves, the victorious youngster then returned home with his companions, laughing and playing.

But a still more wonderful tale is told of Krishna and his friends, the cowherds' children. It is said that one day when they were all out in the fields together, they allowed the cattle to stray a little while during the dinner hour. The god Brahma, noticing from heaven their carelessness, collected and

took away the calves as a punishment. The children, knowing nothing of this mishap, went gaily on with their repast, until quite suddenly one of them said to Krishna, "We are sitting here at our ease and eating; who knows where the calves may have strayed?" Whereupon Krishna jumped up, and exclaimed, "Do you all remain feasting, let no one be anxious; I will collect the calves and bring them here." And away the lad went in his search for the animals, but of course found them not. Then it was revealed to him that the god Brahma had spirited them away.

However, Krishna, the legend says, was equal to the occasion, for, using his divine powers he made other calves, exactly like the lost ones, and drove them before him. Imagine his dismay when, on his return, he found that Brahma had meanwhile abstracted the children. But Krishna, not to be outdone in cleverness, created other children, exactly like those that had been taken away. And the newly-created cattle and children went to their homes, and no one discovered the secret.

And where, meanwhile, were the original children and cattle? Brahma had shut them up in a mountain cave, and blocked up the entrance with a stone, intending only to keep them his prisoners for a day or two. However, the god fell into a state of forgetfulness regarding the circumstance, for the space of twelve months, but then recollecting what he had done he said to himself, "One of my moments has not passed, but a year of mortals has elapsed; I will go and see what has been the state of things in Bruj

without the cowherds' children and the calves." Thinking thus Brahma rose, and went to the cave, and having raised the stone saw the children and the calves were fast asleep. Leaving them there, the god passed on to Bruj, and to his intense astonishment found Krishna and the children playing in the street, while the calves were in the stalls. Then was it revealed to Brahma that it was the miraculous power of Krishna that had caused the illusion, whereupon he bowed to the superior wisdom and greatness of the shepherd-god, and worshipped him. The children and the calves were of course released from the cave.

As Krishna grew in years and became a young man, we are informed that he was a general favourite amongst the fair sex of the district. Many a strange story is told of his escapades with the pretty milkmaids of Muttra and Brindaban. The chief delight of the forward youth was to watch when the girls went to bathe in the Jamna, for then he would steal their clothes, and hang them all over the branches of a great tree, while he sat on a convenient bough, calmly waiting for the damsels to approach to supplicate for their garments. When I was on a visit to Muttra, the identical tree was pointed out to me. I noticed that the branches were literally covered with many-coloured rags; and when I asked the meaning of such a strange display, the priests, who were in attendance, told me, that the pieces of cloth were affixed to the tree as votive offerings by pilgrims from all parts of India, in memory of the merry deeds of the god Krishna in the days of old. Thus you see

the people of India are proud of actions which we think unseemly and wrong.

Krishna sometimes, however, was helpful to those maidens of Brindaban, for there was pointed out to me near the bathing-ghant, a spot where a terrible conflict took place between the young god and a poisonous serpent of monstrous size and strength, which had been a terror to the bathers. Krishna, after an awful struggle, succeeded in obtaining the mastery over the reptile, and thus earned the thanks of all the country side for ridding the river banks of such an enemy.

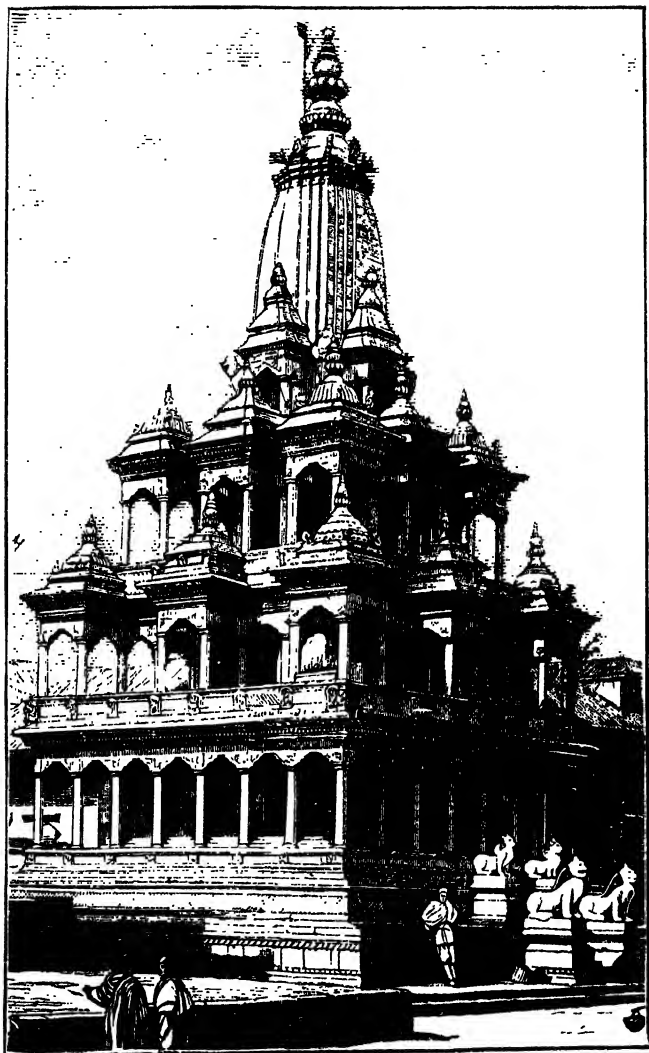
I have in my collection of Indian curiosities an idol which represents Krishna as a young and handsome lad, joyful and triumphant, holding up a great serpent, whose head he has crushed beneath his feet. Speaking of images of Krishna, I might say that he is represented in many forms, the most popular being those which picture him as a babe in his mother's arms ; as a boy resting on one knee with his right hand extended begging for sweetmeats ; as a youth playing a flute or standing on the head of a serpent, and as a man fully armed for battle.

No Indian god seems to have so taken the fancy of the common people as Krishna. The women and children are never tired of talking of his strange actions and marvellous exploits, and they sing his praises all the year round. They call him the pleasant, the cheerful, the merry god, their darling, and seem to see nothing wrong in his character or life.

The miracles which Krishna is said to have wrought

are legion. In addition to those I have related I might mention that the Hindus assert that at the sound of Krishna's flute, stones and trees became animated, and the wild beasts of the field became as tame as turtle-doves. It is said also that he cured many sick people of their diseases by a word. And as a crowning proof of his mighty power, it is declared that on one occasion when the god Indra was angry with the people of Gokul, and tried to destroy them with torrents of rain, Krishna saved their lives by holding a great mountain over their village, balanced on his little finger, just as easily as any ordinary person could have held an umbrella.

There is no need to follow Krishna very closely through the remainder of his eventful history. When he became a man and had gathered round him a number of followers he attacked Kansa, the wicked King of Muttra, who had persecuted his parents, and destroyed him. Thus he became famous as a soldier and a warrior, and his services were in request in every part of India. Finally, he took part in the great wars between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, fighting on the side of the latter, who were victors in the long struggle. It is said that Krishna, who thus survived many enemies and innumerable dangers on fields of battle, was at length accidentally slain while resting in a forest against a tree, by a hunter who mistook him for a tree. If the story be true it was an untimely end to which to come. His foster-brother and life-long companion Bulram, it is said, also perished in the same forest from exhaustion, so that in their death the two friends were not divided.



TEMPLE OF KRISHNA, NEPAUL.

Now who can say how much of this strange story of Krishna's life and doings is truth, and how much is fiction? It almost seems as if somebody of this name did once live in India, and passed through very wonderful experiences, especially in the days of youth and early manhood. To make a god of such a man, and to exaggerate his deeds, would not be unlike the impressible and imaginative people of India.

Some students of Indian history think, however, that the whole tale of Krishna's life is a mere invention, probably founded on imperfect accounts of the life of Christ, which early Christian emigrants would carry to India from Palestine. It really does not matter much which view we hold. Krishna of the Hindus when contrasted with Christ cuts a sorry figure; and this is the point I want my young readers specially to notice. Think of the disobedience of Krishna to his parents; think of the immoral character of the god—of his thievish propensities, and impure actions; think of the silly and childish miracles with which he is credited; think of his days passed in strife and bloodshed. And thinking of these things remember that Christ—God manifest in the flesh—was subject to His parents in all reverence and love; that He grew up an innocent, dutiful child; that as a man He was truthful, and candid, and holy in all His ways; that He was of a peaceful disposition; that He exhorted His friends, neighbours, and fellow-countrymen to love God their heavenly Father, and also to love one another; and that He went about daily doing good to friends and enemies alike, until, in the fulness of time, He died upon the

Cross, a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Thus of Christ, but not of Krishna, we can say—

“And so the Word had breath, and wrought,
With human hands, the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought.”

The anniversary of Krishna's birth is kept in India on the eighth Sravana, which occurs either in July or August. On that day images of the infant Krishna are adorned with sacred leaves, and the idol is fervently worshipped. Then, on the festival called the Huli, the great saturnalia of the vernal equinox in India, Krishna is worshipped with special honours, which too often degenerate into midnight orgies.

Worshippers of Krishna are assured that in this life they will obtain innumerable pleasures, and in the world to come such joys as the heart of man never conceived. The heaven promised to all who call Krishna their god is a vast golden city, containing a multitude of beautifully furnished palaces, mansions, and halls. “Rivers of crystal flow through the city, and broad, beautiful lakes are overshadowed by fair, fruit-bearing trees. These lakes are covered with water-lilies, red, blue, and white, each blossom having a thousand petals; and on the most beautiful of all these calm lakes floats a throne, glorious as the sun, whercon Krishna the beautiful reposes.”

And, sad to say, it is not considered necessary, according to Hindu teaching, that the followers of Krishna should live holy and righteous lives, either for their own comfort and happiness, in this world or the next. All that is considered necessary for salvation

is, that believers should mention the name of Krishna. Then, no matter what may be the character of the worshippers, an abundant entrance into heaven is assured them.

To illustrate the efficacy of the mere name of Krishna, the Hindu gurus, or religious teachers, are fond of relating a story of a wicked woman who daily amused herself by teaching her parrot to repeat the name of Krishna. When the woman died, although she felt no sorrow for her sins, her spirit, it is asserted, went at once to heaven, where she was received with acclamations, and entered upon untold bliss. And all because, in teaching her parrot to talk, she had repeatedly mentioned the name of Krishna.

How different all this is from the teaching of Christ, who deprecated vain repetitions of the name of God, and laid such stress upon holy living as well as trustful faith, saying, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." The best wish we can express for the welfare of the people of India is, that in the religious life of the people Christ may take the place of Krishna.





INDIAN SNAKE CHARMERS.

IX.

SNAKES AND SNAKE WORSHIP.

THE very term snake has an objectionable sound with it, and we doubtless find it difficult to understand that the people of India can worship such a reptile. However, the fact remains that many of them do, for they fear them—especially the poisonous snakes—and worship them to escape the venom of their bite.

In Cashmere years ago, there were said to be seven

hundred temples for snake worship, but nearly all have been demolished. However, in the neighbourhood of Nagpore, or the city of the Naga or Snake, the old worship is still more or less practised. And in South India snake worship very generally prevails amongst the lower classes of the people. In the town of Trevandrum the other day, while a Christian colporteur was reading the Scriptures to some people in the courtyard of a house, a serpent passed by him. He wished to kill it, but was forbidden by his audience, who shouted, "Do not touch it—it is our god." What a god! Just think of falling down and worshipping a snake! To our Western feelings it is shocking in the extreme, but in the East it is an everyday occurrence.

A native gentleman, Sir Madava Row, speaking on this subject in a lecture, once remarked: "Though people die from their venomous bites, serpents are worshipped as living deities by many of my fellow-countrymen. Respectable citizens deem it a duty to set apart a cool patch in their gardens for the comfortable residence of snakes. Occasionally the reptiles creep out into the house itself, just by way of a little change. I have seen many title-deeds of estates in which the snakes are conveyed along with other rights to the purchaser. Cobras wander about freely and in broad daylight in certain of the famous pagodas. There is a temple dedicated to Krishna which is particularly sacred to cobras. Every time I have visited the temple I have been greeted by one or more of these reptiles. Once I saw a huge cobra quietly passing a few yards off, followed by a train of worshippers with

clasped hands. Suddenly it turned and began to wriggle on towards me, when I instantly recollected that I had some urgent business elsewhere and hurriedly left the sacred precincts."

There are more snakes in India than in any other part of the world, and a learned writer on the subject, Sir Joseph Fayrer, asserts that there are at least twenty-one distinct varieties of snakes in the East. Out of this number fortunately only four varieties are venomous, but then there are millions belonging to each variety or order. The snake in India that is most feared is of course the cobra, or to give it its full name, which is derived from the Portuguese, the *Cobra di Capello*. This deadly reptile is found all over Hindustan, and is remarkable for the faculty of dilating the back and sides of the neck, when excited, into the form of a hood.

The cobra is usually three or four feet long, of a pale, rusty brown colour above, and a bluish or yellowish white below. On the back of the neck there is a singular mark, always more or less clear, which bears such a close resemblance to an old-fashioned pair of spectacles that the reptile has from some people received the name of the "spectacles snake." Its ordinary food is lizards, flies, grasshoppers, and other small insects and animals.

There are many sad and thrilling stories told of adventures with snakes on the part of human beings, and every year a very great number of deaths occur, both amongst cattle and mankind, through the bite of snakes, and particularly through the bite of the cobra. It is estimated that 20,000 human beings

every year perish in India alone through this cause. While I was living in Calcutta I remember the case of a boy of ten years of age who was walking along a road in the suburbs and was bitten in the foot by a snake, and though every effort was made to save his life the poor little fellow died after two days of suffering. I remember also the case of a girl of thirteen who was bitten in the arm while she was asleep, and who died within a few hours. And such cases are occurring daily, for the snake is no respecter of persons, putting his venom into the form of a little child as readily as into the form of a grown-up man.

It is not often we hear of Europeans being bitten by snakes in India, though occasionally they have very narrow escapes. Bishop Heber, in his "Diary," tells a story or two on this subject. Writing on September 18th, 1823, while sailing on the Gauges, he says: "This morning, as I was at breakfast, the alarm was given of a great snake in the after-cabin, which had found its way into a basket containing two caps, presents for my wife and myself from Dacca. The reptile was immediately and without examination pronounced to be a cobra, and caused great alarm amongst my servants.

"However, on dislodging it from its retreat it proved to be only a water-snake. It appeared to have been coiled up very neatly round the fur of the cap, and though its bite would not have been venomous, it would certainly have inflicted a severe wound on anybody who had incautiously opened the basket. I had once or twice fancied I heard a gentle hissing, but the idea of a snake in the boat seemed

so impossible that I attributed the noise to different causes or to fancy. Much wonder was expressed at finding it in such a place, but as I have seen one of the same kind climb a tree, it is probable that it had ascended one of the ropes by which the boat is moored at night, and so got amongst us."

Bishop Heber then remarks: "I had heard of an English lady at Patna who once lay a whole night with a cobra under her pillow. She repeatedly thought during the night that something moved, and in the morning, when she snatched her pillow away, she found the thick black throat, the square head, and green diamond-like eye advanced within two inches of her neck. The snake fortunately was without malice, his hood was uninflated, and he was merely enjoying the warmth of his nest: but alas for her, if she had during the night pressed the reptile a little too roughly!"

Sir Edwin Arnold, in his "India Revisited," tells of a gentleman who lived at Malabar Hill, Bombay, and who, when sitting in his verandah one day, heard a rustling beneath his chair, which he took for the sound of his little dog's movements. Thereupon he snapped his fingers under the seat, calling the animal by name. Nothing answering, he looked beneath, and to his horror, saw two cobras there dallying with his suspended palm. In another moment he might all unconsciously have received his death wound. Then I have heard of a lady who when about to enter her bedroom one evening to get her bonnet was advised by her husband to take a light; and, fortunately for herself she did so, for she discovered a



FESTIVAL OF THE SERPENTS, BOMBAY.

cobra coiled up comfortably in the crown of the bonnet.

Snakes as a rule do not chase human beings, or seek to attack them, but rather try to escape out of the way. Knowing this characteristic of the reptile some people always go about with a stout walking-stick or umbrella, not so much with the idea of striking any snake they may meet as to give the reptile warning of their approach by the vibration of the ground, with the result that the snake usually glides rapidly away as the traveller approaches it.

Sometimes, however, vicious snakes are met which boldly attack a stranger, and seem determined to cause mischief. The Rev. J. Ewan, of Bénarès, in his "Sketches and Stories of Native Life," tells a remarkable tale of a vicious snake. He writes: "In the rainy season of 1880, I had the narrowest escape I have ever had. I was returning to Delhi about 9 a.m. one day, along the Agra road, when I saw a bright yellowish snake glide out from among the tombs and come on to the road. I apprehended no danger, and drove on, feeling confident it would get out of my way as I went forward. In this I was mistaken, for it stopped short in front of my horse. The poor brute was paralysed with fright and stood still. The snake was then by the footboard, and before I could take in the situation, it deliberately sprang at me. I instinctively dropped the reins, and the horrible thing flashed past, striking me on the tips of the fingers and the knees as it passed. The spring carried it over the conveyance; but it turned and renewed the attack, and I could distinctly hear

it beating against the bottom. Fortunately the horse, feeling the reins loose, dashed off and broke the spell. When I drew him up and looked back, the snake was still on the road as defiant as ever."

In the charming "Story of Coopooswamey," the author, a native Christian of South India, relates a snake tale about himself when a baby, which his mother had told him. Let me give the story just as it appears in the book, as it throws light on the feelings and sentiments of the Hindus with regard to snake worship. Coopooswamey's mother, it should be noted, was not a Christian. Speaking to her son on one occasion, this lady said: "Once when you were about two years old, you gave me a horrible fright. I left you playing by the side of the hedge in front of the house, and when I went to call you, I saw to my horror a large cobra winding itself round your body and under your legs. You were laughing and crowing and touching its glistening skin with your chubby hands. The serpent seemed pleased with your warmth, and with your gentle, childish way of touching. By a terrible effort I kept from screaming. I knew that if I made a noise or any sudden movement the snake would probably fix its fangs in you, and you would be dead in a few hours.

"I kept quite still, and at length the cobra, observing me, quickly glided into the hedge. Then my screams broke forth as I rushed and caught you in my arms, and pressed you to my bosom. The people came running to know what was the matter. When I told them they raised their hands in wonder." At this stage of the narrative, Coopooswamey exclaimed,

"Did you kill the snake?" but his mother replied with horror, "Kill the snake! we could not do that. It was a god that had come to bless you. Even the shadow of a cobra falling on any one is a good omen. How lucky, then, did we consider you, that the god had even embraced and fondled you."

Then the lad remarked, "Is that why you so often go to the snake hole near the house with offerings of eggs, camphor, and other things?" "Yes," replied his mother, "I have hardly missed a day in visiting the place where I saw the serpent disappear. Sometimes I break a cocoanut there, and sacrifice a fowl in honour of the god that was so gracious to you."

It would appear that poisonous snakes, dangerous though they are, have actually been made pets of by human beings, who have handled them freely. I have heard of a European gentleman at Rangoon, who kept cobras in his house, and who, when he wanted to show one, put his hand boldly into a narrow-mouthed basket, containing quite a number, and pulled out the one he had chosen. Mr. Edward Moor, in his book entitled "*Oriental Fragments*," relates that when he was a boy in India he took a great fancy to a little cobra which he found on the road. It was at first no larger than an ordinary penholder, and the lad kept it for some time in a bottle, feeding it with flies and crumbs of bread. As it got older and larger he put it into a larger bottle, and every now and then took it out for the amusement of himself and a playmate who whistled to the dancing of the pet.

In a while the snake was big enough almost to

fill a gallon bottle, and then it developed restive tendencies, and a neighbour calling at the house, might perhaps find the reptile coiled up on the sofa. One cold morning, Mr. Moor says, the strange creature crawled up into his bedroom, and nestled in the bed beside him, and from that day he became much attached to it. However, in the course of time, when the snake had grown to be more than a yard in length, though it had done no one any mischief, it was decided, in solemn family conclave, that it would be as well to part with it, for fear of future trouble. Accordingly the curious pet was carried to a rocky, sunny place, two or three miles away, and given its liberty; and thus the friendship between the snake and the boy was broken off, much to the distress of the latter, who mourned many days for the loss of his favourite.

In "Old Deccan Days," a book written by Miss Frere, a daughter of Sir Bartle Frere, a story is told of a Brahmin boy in the country west of Poona, who could, as he sat out of doors, by the charms of his voice, attract to himself and handle without fear all the snakes which might be within hearing in any thicket or dry stone wall, such as in that country is their favourite refuge. So great was the popular excitement among the Hindus regarding this boy, that thousands and tens of thousands of people flocked to see him; and as they witnessed the remarkable power he had over snakes, they regarded him also as a god, and proceeded to worship him. The poor lad, however, was at last bitten by one of the reptiles and died, and the wonder ceased.

It has often been a debated point as to whether snakes can kill each other—as to whether their poison is deadly when injected into each other's bodies, just as it is when injected into the bodies of animals and human beings. Dr. Vincent Richards, in his book entitled "*Landmarks of Snake Poison Literature*," says: "I have kept sixty to seventy cobras in a pit together, and they very often, on the slightest provocation, began to fight in a most savage and curious fashion. On being provoked, several commenced to hiss fiercely, and some would raise themselves up, expand their hoods, and begin a vigorous attack in all directions; and after making several ineffectual darts, two would catch each other by the mouth, rapidly entwine themselves, and after wriggling and struggling about in this state for some time, relax their hold. Then one would be seen gliding away vanquished to the corner of the cage, while the triumphant one, raised to its full balancing height, hissed out its challenge for a renewal of the combat. In what consisted the getting the worst of it, I could never discover, as neither of the combatants ever seemed any the worse for the fight; nor can I understand why one snake dreads another if no danger is involved." However, in a footnote to this paragraph, Dr. Richards announces that after other and numerous experiments he at last came to the conclusion that one species of snake could kill another by the injection of poison.

A paragraph which I saw in a Bombay paper a year or two ago, headed "*A Duel between Snakes*," should aid in settling the disputed point. A corre-

spondent writes : " Last Tuesday, when taking an afternoon stroll in my garden, I was surprised to see a cobra and a rock-snake in the road before me, moving in a circle and apparently following each other. This cautious manœuvre was pursued for a time, the circle closing at each round, until when within a few feet, I observed the cobra to stop, coil, and place itself in an attitude to strike. The rock-snake then passed round its antagonist several times, lessening the distance at each round, when it also stopped and began to coil. But before it was ready to strike, the cobra suddenly darted upon it. The evolutions were too rapid to be detected ; and then again I distinctly observed both the snakes stretch out at full length. The rock-snake was enveloped in the folds of the cobra, which had also seized the rock-snake at the back of the head, and held him there. After a short interval the cobra gradually unfolded itself, loosened its grip with its mouth from the rock-snake's head, and moved away. I called to my gardener, who was working a few paces off, but before he could come up to the spot the victor of the duel disappeared in a neighbouring bush. On examination I found the rock-snake to be dead."

In his " Three Years of a Wanderer's Life," Mr. Keene tells the story of a snake and a mouse that is worth repeating. He writes : " I was visiting at a friend's house in Calcutta, and was on a certain evening sitting at dinner alone. I had finished and was still lingering at the table when a little mouse ran up on the top of a bowl with a sort of basket cover on it. I should not have thought that of itself

very singular, for the 'tribes on the frontier' make most unexpected incursions. But this mouse, when he got perched on the cover of the bowl, rose up on his hind legs, with his hands before him, and began to entertain me with the funniest little song you can imagine. Chit—chit, chup—chup—chit, he whistled, and kept it up before me in a most unembarrassed and self-possessed little way. I must have been a trying audience, for I leaned back in my chair and roared with laughter.

"However, as I looked at the little performer I gradually became aware of a shadow, a something strange gliding out from behind a dish toward the mouse. Silently and slowly it drew near: in another minute a beady snake's eye glittered in the lamplight. My hand stole softly for the carving-knife. The snake reared his head level with the mouse, and the poor little fellow's song, which had never ceased, became piercingly shrill, though he sat up rigidly erect and motionless. The head of the snake drew back a little to strike: and out flashed my carving-knife.

"The spell was broken instantly, for the mouse dropped and scampered. The snake was evidently wounded, for there were spots of blood on the tablecloth, and it was writhing about among the dishes and plates. I would not have believed, until I had seen it, how much of himself a snake can stow away under the edge of a plate. At last I saw the end of his tail projecting out from under the dish. A snake held by the tail and swung round rapidly cannot turn and bite. I grabbed the tail with my left thumb and finger, and drew him out until I judged the middle of his body to

be under the knife : then I came down and cut him in two." Thus was the little singing mouse saved from the jaws of death.

Everywhere in India are to be found wandering *samp-wallahs*, or snake-charmers, who for a trifling sum will favour you with an exhibition of snakes which they carry about in a basket or upon their persons. When in Calcutta I often called in these entertaining gentlemen with their snakes, more especially when visitors were in the house from England or Australia. I remember well one entertainment. Two dark fellows came in and squatted on the verandah, with some earthen pots which contained the snakes. The latter were taken out one by one, and made to dance to the noise of a *tubri*, a curious instrument from which the snake-charmers bring out some weird music. The dancing of half a dozen snakes all in a line was very peculiar and somewhat awe-inspiring, for it seemed as if at any moment they might turn on us, the spectators.

However, the men had the snakes well in hand, and made them go through many manœuvres in the dancing line. Then one of the men seized the nearest snake, and immediately twined it round his waist ; the next he threw over his shoulders ; the next round his throat ; and the others round his head and his legs. And not satisfied with this startling display, he irritated the reptiles until they erected their heads and hissed with rage.

The snakes round the man's neck and head actually put out their forked tongues and struck him fiercely on the face, until the blood flowed down pretty freely.



SERPENT-CHARMERS IN INDIA.

The man did not seem to care, but only laughed. And no harm seemed to result from the wounds, which were probably only skin deep. So freely do snake-charmers usually handle their reptiles that some people have supposed that the poisonous fangs must have been previously extracted from the snakes. However, this is not the case.

When Sir Edwin Arnold paid his last visit to India he tells us that he put the matter to the test. A snake-charmer who exhibited before him was questioned as to the presence or absence of poison in his snakes, and replied, "If the gentlefolk would supply a sheep or goat, they might quickly see whether he spoke a true word." "Eventually a white chicken was produced, and seizing his cobra by the neck the juggler pinched its tail and made it bite the poor fowl, which uttered a little cry when the sharp tooth punctured its thigh. But being replaced on the ground the chicken began to pick up rice with unconcern, apparently uninjured. In about four minutes however it ceased moving about, and began to look sick. In two minutes more it had dropped its beak upon the ground, and was evidently paralysed and unable to breathe freely. In another minute it fell over upon its side, and was dead with convulsions within ten minutes after the infliction of the wound."

Seeing that snakes are so common in India, and the bite of many of them so deadly, we can quite understand that great anxiety is shown to find out, if possible, something that will act as an antidote, that life may be saved. The poison of the cobra is secreted in a large gland in the head, and when the

serpent compresses its mouth upon any object the liquid flows through a cavity of a tooth, which is sharp as a needle, into the wound, and quickly runs through the system. Unfortunately nothing has yet been discovered which can, in a genuine case of poisoning, be looked upon as a certain cure.

Dr. Vincent Richards, the specialist already referred to, has examined one by one the so-called antidotes, such as ammonia, arsenic, mercury, nitrate of silver, oil and opium, and declares that all of them when weighed in the balances are found wanting. The man, it would appear, has yet to come forward, who will confer upon his fellow mortals the inestimable boon of a sure antidote to the bite of a venomous serpent.

Amongst other antidotes that have been tried in past years, and found of no use whatever, is the one which bears the name of "snake-stone." I have one in my possession which I bought at Benares from a snake-charmer. It was believed for many years, even by intelligent men, that there was a secretion in the head of a cobra, which, as the snake advanced in years, grew hard like a stone, and that this stone when extracted, as it was often supposed to be by snake-charmers, and applied to the wound inflicted by a snake bite, would immediately cause it to heal.

These "stones" are usually of a dark hue, and are flat like a tamarind stone, and about the same size; that is, say, the size of a threepenny bit. If put into a glass of water they sink, and emit small bubbles every half-score seconds. A snake stone was once sent to Professor Faraday to analyse, and he believed

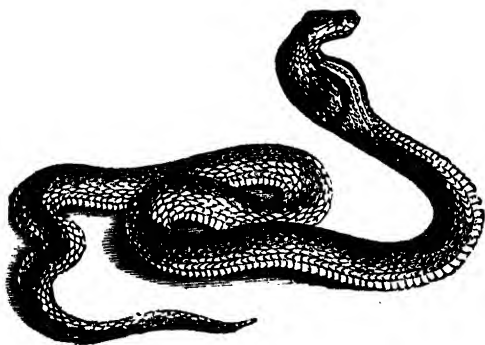
it to be "a piece of charred bone, which had been filled with blood several times, and then carefully charred again. It consisted almost entirely of phosphate of lime, and if broken showed an organic structure with cells and tubes." Probably the fullest and most reliable account of snake stones is to be found in Moor's "*Oriental Fragments*," to which I would refer any of my readers who may be specially interested in the subject. Mr. Moor, in a clever fashion, convicted a snake-charmer of deceit, and the man confessed that he was a rogue, and that snake stones were all an invention of the snake-charming fraternity, to impress the public with their cleverness and to add to their gains.

In the native almanacs the fifth day of Srawan (July-August) is noted as the birthday of the King of the Snakes, and on that day worship is very generally in India offered to snakes. In Benares Hindus of all ranks and of both sexes go to the famous Serpent's Wells in that city, and after bathing therein return quietly to their homes. Elsewhere the practice is for the people to draw a serpentine figure on their houses and do homage thereto. Then they adjourn to the nearest rocks or trees where serpents are known to live, and finding their holes, plant sticks near them, and winding cotton round the sticks hang up festoons of fragrant flowers.

After that is done, offerings of fruit, sugar, ghee and flour are placed round the holes, into which milk is very often poured. The women-folk and children then joining hands, circle five times round the snake's dwelling, and then lie down and watch anxiously to

see if the reptiles will come out of their holes and partake of the things presented to them. If the snakes do, which is usually the case, the foolish people are delighted, and go back to their homes believing that the snake-king has heard their prayers, and will give them his blessing.

When will the people of India learn that the only Being to be worshipped is God, and that the only thing to be feared is sin? It is sin that "biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." And the only remedy for sin-stricken souls is faith in Christ, of whom the Bible speaks when it says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."



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